











*Alcazar*







*Academia das Ciencias, Lisbon*

DON SEBASTIAN

From a contemporary painting by Cristóvão de Morais

# THE BATTLE of ALCAZAR

*An Account of the Defeat of  
Don Sebastian of Portugal at  
El-Ksar el-Kebir*

BY  
E. W. BOVILL

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## Preface

THE importance of the crushing defeat of the Portuguese by the Moors in 1578 at El-Ksar el-Kebir—usually called the battle of Alcazar—has been recognised by all students of the period. Yet very few, if any, attempts have been made to compile from contemporary narratives a full description of the battle and the extraordinary circumstances which accompanied it. That no such attempt has ever been made in the English language is surprising because the ties between Elizabethan England and Morocco were very close. In the following pages, therefore, I have tried to present English readers with a battle-picture they have hitherto lacked.

The sources from which I have obtained my material are recorded in the bibliography and footnotes. But special acknowledgment is due to *Les Sources Inédites de l'Histoire du Maroc*, so ably edited by Le Comte Henry de Castries, which alone has made possible the writing of this book.

The Introduction, in which the political background of the battle is so happily presented, is the work of the Rev. R. Trevor Davies, Lecturer in the History of Spain in the University of Oxford. It is a valuable contribution for which I am very grateful.

E. W. BOVILL

Little Laver Hall,  
Harlow,  
June, 1912



## *Introduction*

THREE great powers helped to shape the fortunes of Europe during the score of years that came before the battle of Alcazar which is the subject of this book. Of these by far the strongest was Philip II of Spain, whose armies were reputedly invincible, whose fleet—or mainly his—had sunk that of the Turk at Lepanto (1571), whose wealth in American silver was reputedly inexhaustible and whose dominions were the most extensive in recorded history. In Europe he possessed in addition to Spain the Netherlands, Franche Comté and—directly or indirectly—the greater part of Italy and many Mediterranean islands such as Sicily, Sardinia and the Balearics. In other regions of the World he possessed—among other lands—all America except Brazil.

With such a vast aggregation of power he was facing a France dominated at times by the House of Guise. The accidental death of Henry II in a tournament (1559) placed on the throne a series of the young sons of his widow Catherine de' Medici—a woman whose maternal instincts and desire for power were almost pathological in their intensity. Francis II, Charles IX, and Henry III were mentally and physically incapable of ruling a France whose monarchy depended for its power upon the personal qualities of its kings. The misguided attempts of Catherine to rule in her children's name gave the House of Guise the opportunity to fight for power against the Huguenot House of Bourbon. Though Catholic they were bitterly anti-Spanish, and though foreigners (Lorrainers) they had risen to power in France by their appeal to French patriotism.

Their hostility to Queen Elizabeth of England, the third power that concerns us, was also intense. Regarding Anne Boleyn's

## INTRODUCTION

bastard as a usurper who excluded Mary Queen of Scots, a niece of the Duke of Guise, from the throne of England, they constructed in imagination a great Guise empire consisting of France, England, Scotland, Ireland and Lorraine. Since, therefore, the first item in the Guise programme was the liquidation of Elizabeth it is not surprising to find that Elizabeth's foreign policy turned upon the supposition that whoever was the Guises' friend was her enemy and whoever was the Guises' enemy was her friend.

The fact that Elizabeth and Philip II shared the same enemies should have drawn them together in friendship; and in her early years as queen it did. She had inherited from Mary an alliance with Philip II, whose ambassador smoothed her way to the throne and who exerted himself to prevent the Pope from excommunicating her during the critical first eleven years of her reign. She carefully kept up an appearance of cordiality for the Spanish king. She assured the Spanish ambassador that she was really a Catholic hindered only at the moment by her powerful subjects from seeking a reconciliation with the Pope and spoke much of her desire to marry one of Philip's cousins the Austrian Archdukes.

The rift between Elizabeth and Spain came gradually and for two reasons—piracy and religious persecution. The piracy was not authorised by Elizabeth, who, in fact, did her best to stop it; but when an English ship arrived in harbour laden with Spanish plunder Elizabeth took a share for herself. She did so simply because she was desperately short of money—a reason that sounded scarcely convincing to Philip. For the same reason she seized the pay for Alva's army in the Netherlands when the ships carrying it were driven by Dutch privateers into English harbours (November 1568). Religious persecution of Roman Catholics came as a result of Pius V's hasty bull (1570) excommunicating Elizabeth and the consequent English mission from Douai of young English priests of great ability and courage. The safety of Elizabeth's throne depended upon putting them to most horrible deaths. Philip as a devout Catholic was increasingly infuriated against the English queen.

But all the time he was painfully aware that the liquidation of Elizabeth could benefit only the Guises, Mary Queen of Scots

being her only imaginable successor. His participation in various plots against Elizabeth (for example, that of Ridolfi 1570-71) was spurred by helpless fury and not by any hope of success; for success, as he well knew, would be his own undoing. Philip continued filled with impotent rage till a diplomatic revolution in the later seventies changed the Guises from enemies to friends and dependants of Spain and thus deprived Elizabeth of her position on the diplomatic chess-board as the check to Guise ambitions. The revolution began its slow course with the Massacre of St Bartholomew in Paris (23 August, 1572) which changed the so-called Wars of Religion in France from a faction fight between rival noble houses—somewhat analagous to the Wars of the Roses in the England of a century earlier—to a war that really had to do with religion like the Great Rebellion in England a lifetime later. The Guises thus became leaders of a religious crusade—the Catholic League—rather than a political faction; and the surviving Huguenots, bereft of their aristocratic politicians, began to fight in deadly earnest for the survival of their Calvinism. The Guises, consequently, tended to gravitate towards Philip II of Spain, the champion of Catholicism everywhere. Don John of Austria struggling against Protestant rebels in the Netherlands came into friendly contact with the Guises and informed the Spanish ambassador in Paris of their friendly disposition towards Spain. Philip seized the opportunity; and a few months later (7th April, 1578) an interview followed between the Duke of Guise and the Spanish ambassador in Paris. The diplomatic revolution was soon complete. The more fanatical grew the Wars of Religion in France the closer grew the ties that united Philip II and the Guises.

Elizabeth's position now grew perilous in the extreme. Philip, able to rely upon the Guises, would look with pleasure upon the succession of Mary Queen of Scots to the English throne and any deadly enterprise against the schismatic Tudor. His policy grew bolder—especially after his acquisition of Portugal with her vast empire and great navy had greatly increased his power (1580). Both he and his ambassador Bernadino de Mendoza took part in the Throgmorton plot (1583) and Throgmorton's confession

under torture of his dealings with Spain caused Elizabeth to expel Mendoza from England (January 1584). She was, however, so terrified of open war with Spain that she sent Sir William Wade to Madrid with the object of explaining her actions and mitigating Philip's displeasure. Philip, however, refused to see Sir William and so put an end to diplomatic relations with England. Thus during the period of King Sebastian's preparations for war in Morocco Elizabeth and Philip II were moving from a cold war in the direction of a shooting war. Hence the eagerness of Elizabeth to be well supplied with saltpetre and other war stores from Morocco.

Relations between Spain and England were complicated by the revolt of the Netherlands, which had been brewing ever since the accession of Philip II to the Burgundian inheritance (1555). Their many grievances had been aggravated by the existence of a drunken and bankrupt nobility and a bewildering variety of Protestant sects. Outbreaks of Calvinist mob hysteria, which the nobles had done little to restrain, led to the sending of the Duke of Alva to the Netherlands at the head of 10,000 Spanish veterans. The Duke's stern measures and heavy taxation led to revolt by land and sea at the instigation of William the Silent. Elizabeth, who disliked Calvinists and rebels, feared the growth of a powerful Dutch Republic opposite the mouth of the Thames. She, therefore, drove the Dutch "Sea Beggars" from English harbours. The totally unintended result of this act was to help the Dutch rebels by leading to the seizure of Brill (1572) and to further infuriate the Spaniards against the English Queen. After the assassination of William the Silent (1584) twelve years later it looked as if the Dutch rebels would come to terms with Spain. Elizabeth now felt that in view of the Spanish danger to herself this must not be allowed to happen. She, consequently, stiffened Dutch resistance by sending an army under the Earl of Leicester. This activity led directly to the sending of the Spanish Armada against England. The destruction of the Armada (August 1588) followed by the triumph of Henry of Navarre in France and the stabilization of the revolt of the Netherlands had a calming effect upon Europe and led to peace—peace between France and Spain (Vervins

1598), peace between England and Spain (London 1604) and the Twelve Years Truce between the Dutch Republic and Spain (The Hague 1609). Thus the diplomatic storms that beat around Sebastian's expedition had died down by the end of the first decade of the new century.

R.T.D.

Oxford,

May, 1912





## CHAPTER I

# *The Fear of the Moor*

ON A WINTER'S DAY early in 1492 the Lord Mayor and Aldermen of London, accompanied by the Court, walked in procession to St Paul's Cathedral where they gave thanks to God for the noble act of "Ferdinand and Isabella, sovereigns of Spain, who to their immortal honour have recovered the great and rich kingdom of Granada from the Moors".

But Isabella was not satisfied. She resolved that she and her husband should carry the war against Islam into Africa and free the Peninsula for ever from the menace of invasion from the south. During the eleven anxious years of the recent campaign, with the final issue long in doubt, the great fear of the Christians had been intervention from Africa, fear lest the Moslems of the Maghreb should come to the aid of the Moors in Granada. Owing to the wars in Italy and the apathy of her husband, Isabella was unable to make much progress with her resolve. But up to her dying day the conquest of Africa remained close to her heart. "I beg my daughter and her husband", read her will, "that they will devote themselves unremittingly to the conquest of Africa and to the war for the Faith against the Moors."

Isabella's chief abettor in her African plans had been Francisco Ximenes, archbishop of Toledo. He allowed neither the Queen's death nor Ferdinand's apathy to deflect him from the course on which he and she had set their hearts. Playing upon the King's concern at the growing menace of African corsair raids on the shores of Spain, he wrung from Ferdinand his grudging consent to an assault on the Barbary coast. But the Moors proved stronger than had been expected. After varied fortunes over a period of years the Spaniards suffered such a disastrous reverse in an attack on Jerba that they lost for a while all taste for African adventures.

Under Ferdinand's successor, Charles, the war against the Moors was resumed, but again with varied fortunes. It was finally abandoned in 1519 when Charles was elected emperor as Charles V, with the over-riding duty of assailing the infidel Turks who were pressing hard upon eastern Europe. But presently a critical situation arose in the Mediterranean. The arch-pirate Khair ed-din, or Barbarossa, who had made himself master of the greater part of the North African coast, offered his fleet and his services to the Sultan, Suleiman the Magnificent. The acceptance of the offer placed all the coast of Barbary up to the frontier of the kingdom of Fez under Ottoman rule. The Turks, now within striking distance of the Peninsula, were seriously challenging Spanish dominance in the western Mediterranean.

Charles took alarm, but with the great resources which he commanded he had little difficulty in turning the tide of Ottoman fortunes on the seas. The culmination of his campaign came in 1535 with the destruction of Barbarossa's corsair fleet as it lay at anchor in the lake of Tunis. This, however, was followed by a series of reverses, chiefly due to Charles's irresolution and his failure to follow up successes and consolidate gains. At the close of his reign Ottoman naval supremacy was so firmly established in the west that no part of the Spanish shore was secure against corsair raids.

When Philip II succeeded to the Spanish crown in 1555 his religious zeal, at first directed against the crushing of heresy at home, soon impelled him to repress the infidel raiders who were not only sacking towns and villages and enslaving thousands of his Spanish and Italian subjects but even waylaying his rich galleons returning from the Americas. After an initial reverse at the fateful island of Jerba, he defeated the Turks, first before Oran and then at Peñon de Velez from which he drove them.

There still remained in Spain a large Moorish community, known as Moriscoes or New Christians, who had been compulsorily accepted into the Christian faith long before Philip's accession. Compulsion had done little to weaken their adherence to Islam, and they still paid tribute to the Shereef of Fez who year by year sent his envoys secretly to Spain to collect it. Philip

discovered this, and the ruthless measures he took to purge his Moorish subjects of the last vestiges of the religion of their fathers provoked, in 1568, a rebellion among the hillmen of the Alpujarras which quickly attained alarming proportions. It was not crushed till two years later and then only at the cost of 60,000 Spanish lives.

As in the days of Ferdinand and Isabella, the great fear of the Christians as they fought the insurgent Moors was invasion from Africa. It was known that the Moslem world had not lost hope of a re-conquest of Spain and that the leaders of the revolt were in close touch with their co-religionists in Africa. Had they wished, the Moors of Barbary could have landed on the coast of Andalusia without fear of resistance, for Philip's forces were too fully engaged to spare troops for its defence. Happily for the Christians, there was no one in Africa to organise an assault on Spain. Nevertheless, the danger had appeared great and had awakened the Peninsula's old dread of invasion from Africa whence, through the ages, conquering hordes—Byzantines, Arabs, Almoravids and Almohads—had repeatedly emerged.

After his annihilation of the Ottoman fleet at Lepanto in 1571 Don John of Austria, Philip's bastard half-brother, directed his turbulent energies towards advancing Spanish interests on the African coast. He captured Tunis, but its recovery the following year by the corsair chief Aluch Ali, a Calabrian renegade, convinced Philip, as similar reverses at Moorish hands had convinced Charles and Ferdinand, of the futility of attempting to establish Spanish domination on the Barbary shore.

But had Philip wished otherwise he would unquestionably have been forced by the grave economic embarrassments of his kingdom to abandon any hope of further military operations in Africa. Although Spain commanded almost unparalleled sources of wealth, Philip had been in financial difficulties ever since his accession. The wealth of the mines of Mexico and Peru was quickly devoured by corrupt and incompetent officials. The Netherlands had long been a constant drain on the exchequer, and the Spanish possessions in Italy contributed nothing. The negotiating of foreign loans was becoming increasingly difficult and at home the

raising of money was almost impossible. The greater part of the wealth of the country was in the hands of the Church which was immune from taxation. Under ancient charters Aragon and Catalonia enjoyed almost the same immunity. The Castilian nobility were also exempt. In the Netherlands Alva's six years of bloody rule had forced William of Orange into open rebellion. The army, with its pay long in arrears, was on the verge of mutiny. War with England seemed probable and Elizabeth was sparing no effort to add to Philip's embarrassments. There was unrest in Naples, and Genoa had had to be humiliatingly placated for fear of provoking the French.

Such was the situation which confronted Philip in 1576. In April of that year his aid was sought, in men and in money, for an enterprise of great hazard.

Ever since Portugal had become an independent kingdom in the twelfth century the Castilians had cherished the hope of re-annexing it. When force of arms had failed they had sought to achieve their object by marriage ties. But Portugal had never lacked an heir with an unassailable title to the throne. The country's newly won possessions overseas gave Philip greater reason than any of his predecessors to covet his neighbour's crown. But his aspirations were blocked by the young son of his sister Joanna who now ruled in Lisbon. It was this nephew, Don Sebastian of Portugal, who had addressed to Philip the appeal which, no matter how unwelcome and untimely, the uncle could not afford to ignore.

Within living memory the Portuguese had become a great colonial power. In the West they were established in Brazil, in the East their *Estado da India*, governed by a viceroy at Goa, nominally extended from Africa to Japan. The rich spice trade, hitherto the jealously guarded monopoly of Venice, had fallen into their hands. This great access of wealth had changed the character of Lisbon where the adoption of the luxurious habits of the Indies and a revival of art and literature had given social life a brilliance to which the rest of Europe could offer no equal.

But the golden age had been short. The great and rapidly acquired empire imposed a burden too great to be supported by a small country whose manhood had been sapped by centuries of fighting against Moors and Castilians. The remoteness and extent of the empire made its control from home impossible. In spite of its great wealth, by 1515 the *Estado da India* had been reduced by a corrupt and incompetent administration to dependence on grants from the royal treasury. Unable to meet these demands, King Emmanuel had debased the coinage which, by driving the country's trade elsewhere, had merely aggravated his embarrassments. Bullion, from both Brazil and the Indies, had continued to flow into Lisbon but what had escaped the rapacity of officials had been squandered, mostly on colonial wars and the Church.

The drain of these great possessions on the country's manpower continued. The garrisoning of the new settlements, the manning of the fleets and the recruitment of the colonial administrative services became increasingly difficult as more and more Portuguese left the mother country to seek fortunes in Brazil or lucrative sinecures in India. Of the many thousands of emigrants, drawn mostly from the flower of the country's manhood, only one in ten ever returned. How grave for the country this was is clearly shown by the decline in the population from two million in 1500 to half that number before the close of the century. One of the worst consequences of this steady depopulation was the decay in agriculture. To make good the shortage of peasants and labourers great numbers of negro slaves had been imported from Africa, especially into the south where the population had become predominantly black.

But the calamity that was impending was due less to national debility than to a constitutional change which, too, had been introduced during the lives of many still living. The greatest ornament of the royal house of Aviz had been John II, to whose statesmanship and vision Portugal owed the great empire it acquired in the following reign. Until John's accession the kings of Portugal had ruled by the goodwill of the people as represented by the Cortes. The effective power, however, had passed into the hands of the feudal nobility who exercised an intolerable tyranny over

the common people. John broke the power of the nobles, dispensed with the Cortes and reigned as a benevolent and dearly loved despot. In short, he gave his country an absolute monarchy.

The system worked well enough under John and also under his successor Emmanuel. But it was in the latter's reign that the country's subservience to the will of the crown became complete. The king's virtual monopoly of the eastern trade concentrated in his hands the great influx of new wealth. All those who aspired to a share in it, whether in the form of coveted sinecures or handsome pensions, could look only to the king for the advancement of their interests. The people gave him the blind and unquestioning devotion which John had won for the crown when he rid the country of a rapacious nobility. Loyalty to the king, which at times approached personal worship, took the place of patriotism. The throne became invested with such unlimited power that should it ever pass into unworthy hands the consequences might well prove disastrous.

Emmanuel, a pious and cultured man, did not abuse this boundless power. Nor did his son who succeeded him as John III. The latter's principal disservice to his country was the introduction of the Inquisition. But of greater consequence, though less discreditable to John, was his failure in a long reign of thirty years to arrest the progress of a decay which was shortly to lead to the disruption of the kingdom. The predatory sycophants who surrounded his throne, the corruption of the public services, at home and abroad, and the paralysing grip of the Holy Office combined in John's reign to destroy all the fine qualities which in Emmanuel's time had made Portugal a world power.

Financial, moral and intellectual bankruptcy was the legacy which John bequeathed to the three-year-old grandson who succeeded him in 1557. The child, Don Sebastian, was destined to complete his country's ruin.

*Don Sebastian*

FORTUNE FROWNED UPON Sebastian, even before he had entered the world. His father, the son of John III, had died a few days before his birth and his widowed mother, Joanna, a daughter of Charles V, had deserted her child for her own country soon afterwards. She had refused the regency, on the grounds of her youth, in favour of the old queen-dowager, Catherine, her child's grandmother and her own aunt, the queen of John III and sister of the Emperor Charles V. As a queen Catherine had shown great qualities with which she had loyally served the country of her adoption. That she never won the confidence of the Portuguese and was therefore to fail as a regent was not her fault. The Portuguese hated everything Spanish. Catherine was unfortunately Spanish in birth, speech, bearing and appearance and was therefore disliked and mistrusted.

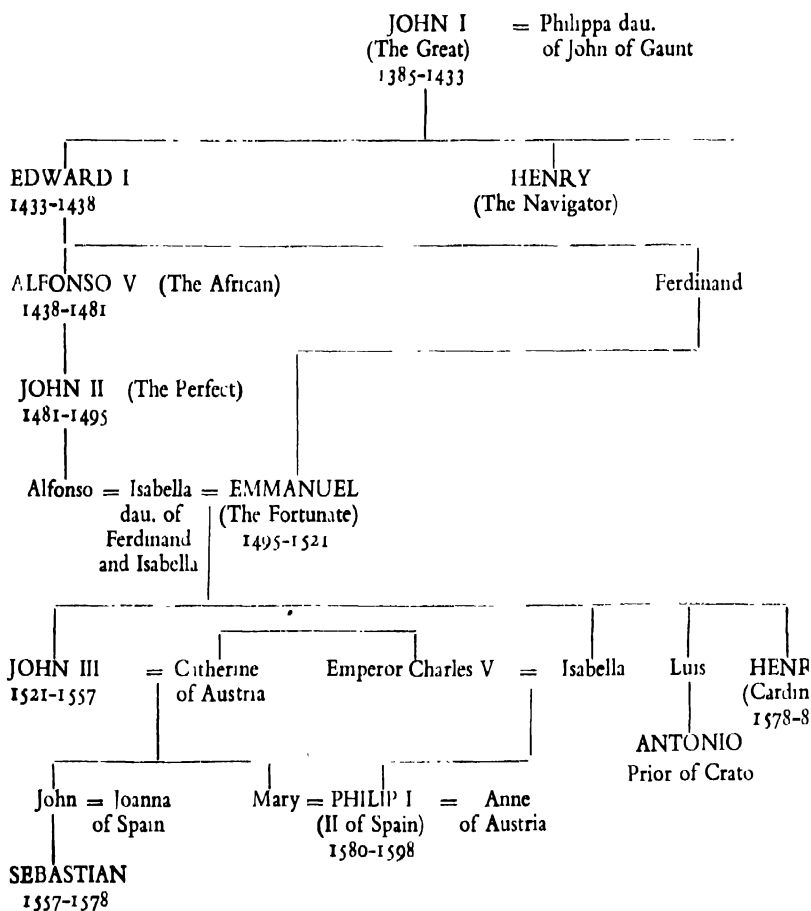
The likelihood of the infant king never reaching manhood in those days of high infant mortality was considerable. Except for him and his great uncle, Cardinal Henry, who being bound by a vow of celibacy did not count, there was no one to stand in the way of the crown passing to Philip II of Spain—and of the hated Spaniards realising the ambitions they had cherished for centuries and which the Portuguese had no less fervently hoped would never be realised. The possibility of this dreaded union greatly aggravated the anti-Spanish feeling of which Catherine was the chief victim.

The difficulty of her position was increased by the jealousy of Cardinal Henry who, as heir presumptive, thought he had a better claim to the regency. Relying upon the anti-Spanish feeling of the populace, and persuading perhaps himself as well as others that she was plotting the very union they all feared, Henry finally

# THE KINGS OF PORTUGAL

from

## JOHN I to PHILIP I





succeeded in compelling her to surrender the regency to himself. In 1562, after five years of conscientious administration, Queen Catherine retired sadly to Spain. Thus the influence which might have saved Sebastian and his country was removed just when it was most needed, and for a second time the child was abandoned to the chances of fortune.

Henry proved an incompetent regent and an unwise guardian. He allowed both the government and the King to pass into the hands of two Jesuits, the brothers Luiz and Martini Gonçalves da Camara. The former, at Catherine's request, had been especially sent from Rome to become the royal confessor and tutor when Sebastian was only five years old. The child's education was entrusted to Luiz, the administration to Martini, an able and ambitious statesman. Both brothers were accused of having played a prominent part in the intrigues which brought about the fall of Catherine.

It was not long before the Camara brothers realised that their interests would be better served by having Sebastian at the head of the state in the place of Cardinal Henry. In 1568, therefore, when Sebastian was not yet fifteen, the brothers declared him of age and Henry was excluded from power. The destiny of the country and its young king remained for a time in the hands of its priestly rulers and the corrupt officials with whom they had filled all places at court. The régime was detested and the courageous Camoens, fearing the ruin which it threatened, attacked it in his *Lusiads*. Nonetheless, as we shall see, Luiz was capable of wise counsel.

Sebastian grew into a well-built and athletic young man distinguished by blue eyes, fair hair and a white skin which to his swarthy countrymen gave him a peculiar appearance and led to the belief that he was sexually impotent. His looks were marred by the pendant Hapsburg lip, perhaps the most persistent human physical characteristic known to history. In manner he was grave, taciturn and dignified. His character bore the marks of the rigorous clericalism in which he had been brought up. He was a mystic and a fanatic who from childhood had visions of crusading triumphs. His mental equipment was of a low order and this

rendered doubly dangerous a hot temper and extreme obstinacy, both fostered by the adulation of the sycophants and place-seekers surrounding the throne. Unintelligent, self-willed and fanatical, Sebastian was ill-suited to the role of absolute monarch which he had been called upon to fill and at which he eagerly grasped.

On taking over his responsibilities he had small regard for the needs of his country, if indeed he made himself aware of them. That he attempted neither to purge the administration of the corruption which was patent to everyone nor to restore the broken finances of the kingdom must be charged against the Camaras rather than against the King himself. The need for his early marriage in order to secure the succession of the throne can hardly have escaped him, but apart from a formal and unsuccessful proposal for the hand of Princess Margaret of France he did nothing about it. An interest in foreign affairs was only awakened by the massacre of St Bartholomew which commanded his enthusiastic approval.

He was obsessed, to the exclusion of all other interests, with the idea of winning imperishable glory by leading the forces of his kingdom against the enemies of Christendom. It has been suggested that he had been inspired by a suit of armour made for him by Anton Pfeffenhauser of Augsburg, a leading armourer of the day, which is still the pride of the magnificent collection in the Royal Armoury of Madrid. One would like to think of Father Luiz pointing out to his pupil the *coudières*, or elbow guards, on which were four figures representing the cardinal virtues, of the small boy refusing to be distracted from the more exciting designs on the breast plate and back plate symbolical of Power, Victory, Peace and Navigation, and finally conceiving a resolve, later to become an obsession, one day to wear the suit in battle and prove himself worthy of its dazzling splendour. But there is nothing to justify such thoughts.<sup>1</sup> All we know is that the inflexible determination was there from a very early age, that it waxed with years and that the chief instrument was to be Sebastian's own army, regardless of the inadequacy of its numbers and its

<sup>1</sup> It is probable that this famous suit was not made for him until he was a grown man.

equipment and of the sorry state of the national exchequer which even in peace could not meet the needs of the kingdom and the empire.

The King's first idea was to sail east and place himself at the head of his troops in India. He allowed himself to be dissuaded from this by Pedro de Alcaçova Carneiro, who had replaced Martini Gonçalves da Camara as chief minister. On second thoughts Africa seemed to Sebastian to offer a more attractive field for a crusade. It was conveniently close and already held three Portuguese fortresses, Ceuta, Tangier and Mazagan, on which operations could be based. It was in danger of falling into Turkish hands, which, if Portugal did not act first, might lead Philip to forestall his nephew and reap the glory which the latter had persuaded himself was so easily to be won. Finally, within Sebastian's memory it was only Africa that had provided Portuguese arms with what his people had long ceased to expect, a victory. This had been at Mazagan in 1562.

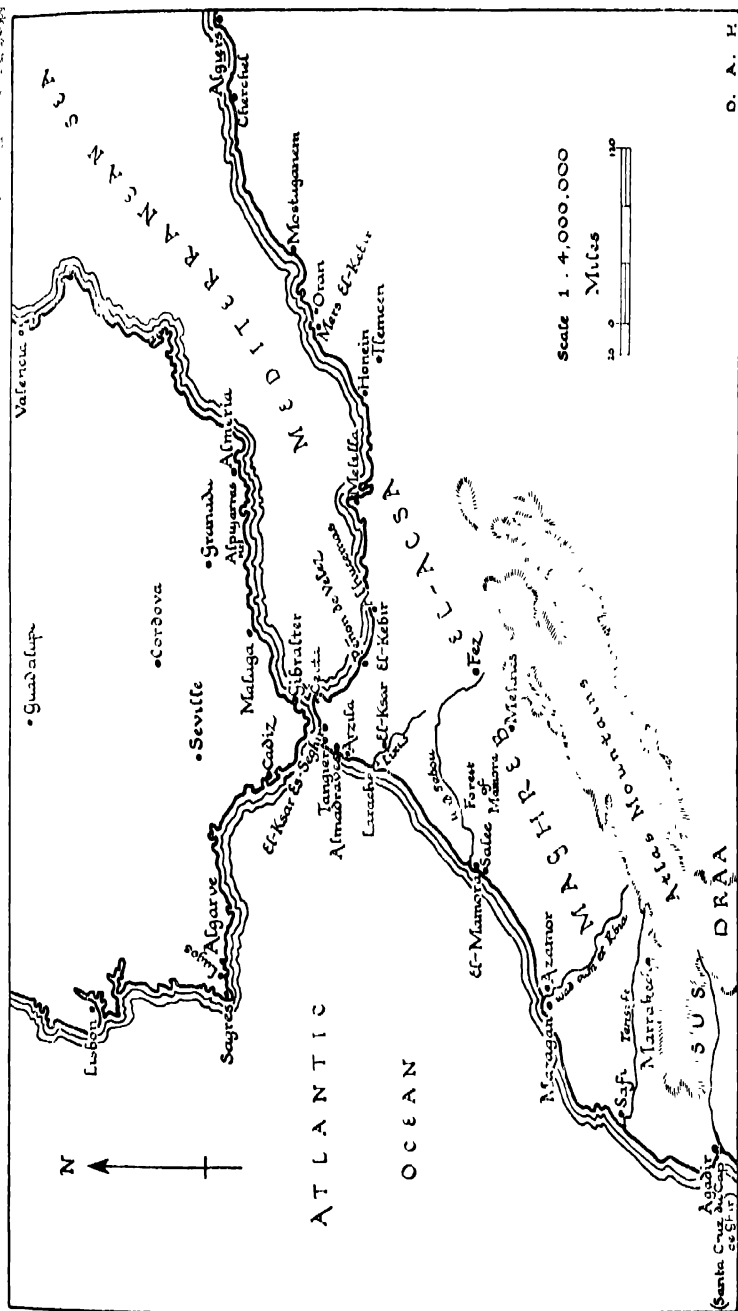
It was the desire to anticipate Spanish intervention in Morocco, combined with the need to curb the activities of Moorish pirates, which had led the Portuguese to seize Ceuta in 1415. That initial success had led to further adventures and the seizure in the course of the next hundred years of El-Ksar es-Seghir and Tangier on the Straits, and Arzila, Azamor, Mazagan, Safi, Cabo do Sul and Agadir (Santa Cruz du Cap de Ghir) on the Atlantic coast. These outposts or *fronteiras*, as they were called, offered few advantages to compensate for the anxiety which they caused to Lisbon. They were a constant provocation to the Moors who proved implacable enemies and made it perilous for a Portuguese to venture beyond the walls of a fortress. The garrisons seldom had enough land on which to grow food crops and unless the natives were prepared to trade, which often enough they were not, the *fronteiras* were dependent on Lisbon for supplies. This was a serious embarrassment, for the provisioning of distant fortresses across such pirate-infested seas was hazardous and costly. From time to time the Moors would make determined attacks which necessitated the retention of strong garrisons.

In the reign of John III the Beni Saad, who had previously

driven the Portuguese from before the gates of Marrakech, had succeeded in evicting them from Agadir. Encouraged by this success, the Moors had made repeated attacks on Safi and Azamor, in the face of which John had evacuated them. The abandonment of Cabo do Sul, Arzila and El-Ksar es-Seghir had followed. Most of these *fronteiras* had been held by Portugal since the reign of Alfonso V. Their abandonment was certainly in the best interests of the country and constituted one of the few wise acts of John's undistinguished reign. Portugal had thus been left with Ceuta and Tangier in the north, and in the south, in the Saadian kingdom of Marrakech, only Mazagan which had not been abandoned because the continuance of certain papal favours depended upon its retention.

The Beni Saad, whose influence and self-confidence had been enormously increased by their successes against the Portuguese and the capture of Fez from the Merinids, had resolved to destroy the last Christian outposts and completely rid their country of infidels. In 1562, after first threatening Tangier and Ceuta, the Saadian sultan or shereef, as he was called, had assembled before the walls of Mazagan an immense army composed of over 120,000 infantry, 37,000 cavalry, 13,500 pioneers and 24 pieces of artillery, commanded by the Shereef's young son Mulai Mohammed. A small Portuguese garrison of only 2,600 men, commanded by Rodrigo de Sousa de Carvalho, had successfully beaten off repeated attacks and inflicted such heavy losses on the Moors that they had been compelled to raise the siege and withdraw.

Many inglorious decades had passed since the Portuguese army had won the applause of its countrymen. The story of the defence of Mazagan had consequently awakened feelings of enthusiasm and pride throughout the country. Falling, as it did, when Sebastian had reached the impressionable age of eight it may well have kindled in him an enthusiasm for Africa such as his predecessors had reserved only for India and Brazil. It may be that Mazagan fired him to emulate his ancestor, Alfonso V, known as the African, whose conquests his grandfather John had, as it seemed to him, so lightly abandoned.



**SPAIN AND NORTH AFRICA**

Sebastian's advisers shared neither his enthusiasm for, nor his confidence in, his African project. The best they could say for it was that it was slightly less foolhardy than his Indian plan. His Jesuit advisers were accused of encouraging the African enterprise, but there is reason to believe that Father Luiz did his utmost to influence the King against it. When asked by Sebastian for his advice he said that there were three essential pre-requisites without which he should not wage war in Africa. First, the people must be satisfied that the dynasty would be continued and the country's independence secured which could not be before the birth of four or five male heirs; secondly, the country must be secure from danger and disturbance during the King's absence; thirdly, he must be abundantly supplied with all the needs of war—troops, money and supplies—without having to oppress the people to obtain them. It was the advice of a wise and far-seeing man who, had his words been heeded, might have saved the kingdom from the fate of which he saw the danger. Luiz's early influence may not always have been for the best, but he deserved better of posterity than the contumely it heaped upon him for causing the very disasters which he foresaw and begged the King not to risk.

By 1570 the King, then only sixteen years old, could wait no longer to satisfy the ambition which had taken such deep root in his mind. Military preparations for the conquest of the Moors were put in hand on a large enough scale to attract notice in neighbouring countries and to cause considerable alarm in Portugal itself. He was, however, restrained by his countrymen, who were fearful lest they should be led to disaster by the impetuous youth, and made to give an undertaking to remain in Lisbon where he could be watched. He kept his promise, but time only served to strengthen his determination to realise his great ambition.

Sebastian's confinement to his kingdom was no reason for him to remain at peace with the infidels. In 1572 he appointed Rodrigo de Sousa de Carvalho to the governorship of Tangier in the hope that under the gallant defender of Mazagan of ten years before the garrison would score some victories over the Moors. Disappointed

with the results, he taunted the governor, who had recently married, with preferring to be in bed with his bride to hazarding his life in battle. Piqued at so unjust a reproach, Rodrigo de Sousa flung himself into the *mêlée* at his next contest with the Moors, regardless of their overwhelming superiority in numbers. He fought desperately but eventually went down under the blows of his antagonists. When his body was recovered it was found to bear more than a hundred wounds.

The last words of Sebastian's dying mother had been a prayer that her son would be restrained from crossing into Africa. But, in August 1574, within a year of her death, the Portuguese court was thrown into consternation by a message from the King which showed that her prayer had not been answered. Now twenty-one and free from his undertaking to remain in the capital, he had done what they had prevented him from doing at sixteen. He had sailed secretly from Lagos to launch his long cherished project of African conquest.

The monarchy, as we have seen, occupied in the eyes of the Portuguese people a mystical position which approached divinity. The king was the personification of the nation and of the state and of all that an intensely proud people most cherished. The person of Sebastian was doubly dear to his people, for his life was all that stood between them and union with their hated neighbour Spain. Sebastian's leaving the kingdom secretly was alarming enough. But he had done so in circumstances which courted the very disaster his people most dreaded. He had embarked upon an adventure which all had condemned as foolhardy without anyone being given a chance of making any provision against its hazards. All he himself had done was to send ahead a paltry force of 1200 infantry which had arrived in Ceuta the previous month. With these few men and the weak garrisons in Tangier and Ceuta, he proposed to conquer the Moors, a far stronger and better armed people than their kinsfolk whose expulsion from Europe had cost Spain seven centuries of bloodshed. These were the people against whom the young King had gone to measure his strength with only a few hundred ill-trained troops at his back. Alarm spread quickly through his country. Public prayers and processions were ordered

in every town and village to invoke God's protection for the King's life.

Although Ceuta belonged to the Portuguese their dominion was confined to the few acres which form the rocky headland. None could venture beyond its protecting walls without an escort. So simple a matter as the collection of firewood had to take the form of a military operation. At Ceuta Sebastian was joined by a party of Portuguese and Castilian nobles with whom he made daily excursions into the surrounding country, seeking an opportunity to cross swords with the enemy. It chanced that political disturbances in the interior had drawn off most of the local fighting men and there were therefore not enough to resist these unusual sortics. Disgusted at finding none to offer him battle, Sebastian moved along the coast to his fortress at Tangier. Here the Church and a number of responsible officers vainly endeavoured to dissuade him from his mad project of conquering the country. Meanwhile the Moors, having learnt of his intentions, had assembled a large body of cavalry outside the town. Undismayed by an enemy which greatly outnumbered his little force, Sebastian accepted battle and fought heroically till nightfall, but without reaching a conclusion. By extraordinary good fortune, which few of his men shared, he got safely back to Tangier, well pleased with himself and satisfied that the engagement had been a great success. Happily for the King and the few survivors, he decided not to renew the battle but instead to go back to Portugal and there prepare for a second expedition on a more ambitious scale.

Within a fortnight of the King's providential return to his anxious countrymen he sought to involve England in his Moorish plans. The scheme which he unfolded to the English ambassador was a little startling. Some English merchants were to sail to Agadir and take with them Portuguese caravels the crews of which they were to sell as slaves to the natives in order to gain Moorish confidence. Sebastian would follow with his whole army. When he appeared the Englishmen, feigning terror of the Portuguese, were to dash ashore and seek refuge in the fort where they would turn upon the defenders and make its capture easy for the King.

In the ambassador's dispatch to the Lord Treasurer, Burghley,



reporting his rejection of this ingenuous proposal he compared Sebastian with Philip. "As the King of Spain refers all his doings to his Council, so the King of Portugal will do all as he list himself; and so, against all their wills, he went to his town of Tangier, in Barbary, and there found the Moors so strong that he was fain to return; and doth promise to go there again at the spring of the year."<sup>1</sup>

Sebastian had too many sycophants about him to be discouraged by the rebuff from England. One of the most complacent was his principal minister, Alcaçova, who had been chief minister during the regency until his dismissal by Cardinal Henry. Restored to power, he had resolved that if he were to fall again it would not be from lack of enthusiasm for the hair-brained schemes of his new master. He accordingly applauded all Sebastian's designs and eagerly furthered the African project.

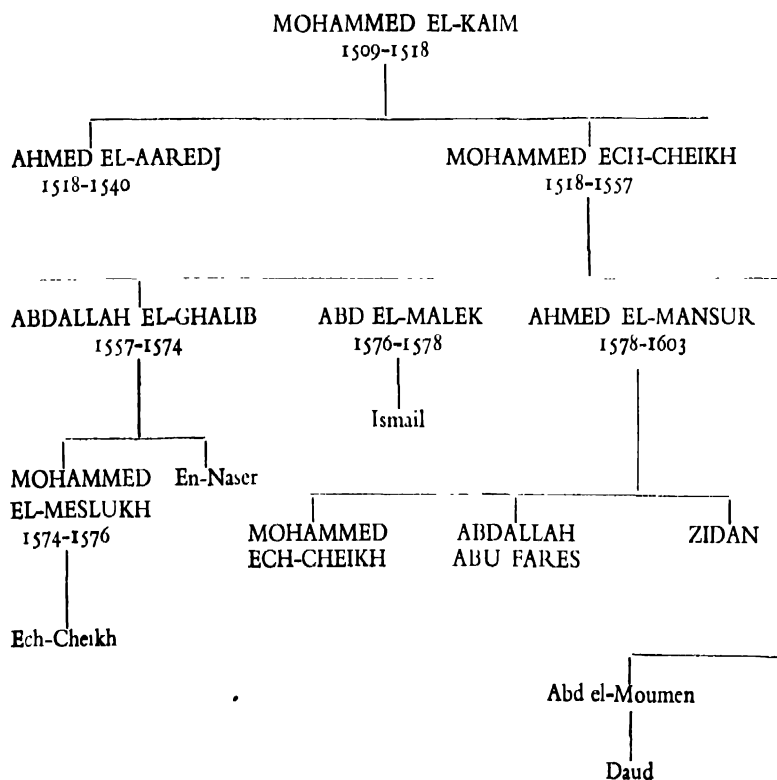
But Sebastian received still greater encouragement from an unexpected quarter. Mulai Mohammed, a Moorish sultan who had recently lost the throne of the kingdom of Fez and Marrakech to his uncle, Abd el-Malck, had sought refuge in the Spanish fortress of Peñon de Velez from where he had appealed to Sebastian to come and restore his kingdom to him. In doing so he assured the King that it was a heaven-sent opportunity for him to become emperor of Morocco.

Sebastian was thus offered not only a plausible pretext for the invasion of Africa but also a prospect as dazzling as any even he can have conceived. Summoning his council he declared his intention of replacing the suppliant Mulai Mohammed on the throne of his ancestors. Some advised caution. Sebastian had no heir and therefore must not risk his life; Christian arms were better employed against heretics than infidels; the enterprise demanded greater forces than the King could command, and so on. But there were plenty of others who, out of self-interest or ignorance, were prepared to support Sebastian and, as had now become usual, he had his way.

<sup>1</sup>Public Record Office, *State Papers, Foreign, Elizabeth* (Vol. CXXXII, No. 973) (apud de Castries, *Les Sources Indéites de l'Histoire du Maroc, Angleterre I*, p. 142).

# THE SAADIAN DYNASTY

1509 to 1628



## *Mulai Mohammed*

THE BENI SAAD, to whom the Portuguese had surrendered all but one of their fortresses in southern Morocco, were Berberised Arabs who claimed descent from the Prophet and were therefore known as the Saadian shereefs. Their homeland was in the provinces of Draa and Sus, far away to the south, where the foothills of the Atlas run down to the Atlantic. The shereefs' only claim to importance had been their commercial enterprise. This had brought them into contact with Christian peoples, especially with the English whose merchants came to their ports to buy the sugar of Sus, saltpetre and gold.<sup>1</sup> The expansion of the shereefs northwards into the more fertile plains across the Atlas early in the sixteenth century was the first sign of territorial aspirations which were not to be satisfied until they had become masters of the greater part of Morocco. Their advance had brought them into conflict with the Berber Merinids of Fez, a branch of the Beni Wattas, the nominal rulers of the Moroccan Moors since the thirteenth century. The shereefs nevertheless established themselves firmly in Marrakech which remained their capital.

Five hundred years earlier Marrakech had been built as a capital by the first invaders from the south, the Almoravids. They had come a great deal further than the shereefs, for their homeland was south of the Sahara. Their advance northwards had not ceased until they had conquered the Arab provinces of Spain and established their dominion from the Senegal to the Ebro. The occupation of Marrakech by the shereefs was the first step in a

<sup>1</sup> The English had traded with Morocco from much earlier times. For example, in the twelfth century England was importing Morocco leather which, although shipped from Morocco, was a product of the Sudanese who exported it northwards across the Sahara.

*career which also was to frighten Europe and end in the establishment of a second empire spanning the Sahara.*

The shereefs, encouraged by their success against the Wattasids, next rid their homeland of infidels by capturing, as we have seen, the Portuguese fortress at Agadir, the governor of which gave his daughter in marriage to their sultan or shereef, Mohammed ech-Cheikh, sometimes known as El-Mahdi. This and the subsequent abandonment by the Portuguese of other ports whetted their appetite for conquest. In 1549 they continued their northward advance and captured Fez, the Wattasid capital.

At this time the north of the country was also threatened. The Ottoman Turks had recently reached Tlemcen and appeared intent on advancing to the Atlantic seaboard. The northward incursion of the shereefs was a menace they could not ignore. They attacked Fez, drove out its Arab conquerors and restored the Berber Wattasids to power. A few years later the shereefs, still led by Mohammed ech-Cheikh, recovered Fez and made themselves masters of the Wattasid kingdom. For a time their position was insecure. The substitution of Arab for Berber rule was naturally distasteful to a predominantly Berber population, but there were more material reasons for their dislike of the change. The shereefian treasury was unable to meet the heavy claims made by so large a territory. Burdensome taxes had therefore to be imposed and tribes who had never before been taxed were forced to bear their share of the burden. This excited active hostility in which the *zarwia* or religious houses, outraged by the demands made upon them, took a leading part. The rebels went to the length of seeking Turkish help.

The rebellion was quelled, but with a ruthlessness which further embittered the people against their conquerors. Fez was the chief centre of unrest, so Marrakech remained the shereefian capital. For centuries past Fez had been the chief political, economic and intellectual centre of the Maghreb el-Acsa. Latterly it had become the refuge of the thousands of men of letters who had been expelled, or had fled, from Spain. Stimulated by this infusion of virile new blood, the city had grown into one of the greatest seats of learning in the Moslem world. This, however, did nothing to

diminish the dislike with which the Fezzi were regarded by the rest of the country on account of *their conceit, avarice, cowardice* and love of intrigue. The more important Fez became intellectually the more arrogant grew its citizens, and the greater their traditional contempt for Marrakech, with its one bookseller and a university which, in the scornful words of Leo Africanus, a graduate of Fez, had "a most senseless professor, and one that is quite void of all humanity".

The whole of the Moroccan traffic in negro slaves, who for centuries had been traded across the Sahara, strewing the caravan routes with their bones, filtered through the southern capital. The people of Marrakech had consequently become noticeably negroid. Their dark skins, smiling faces and the readiness with which they entered into intercourse with Europeans had always excited the contempt of the Fezzi. That Fez had to bow its proud head to Marrakech was a humiliation for which the shereefs were never forgiven.

Although Mohammed ech-Cheikh made himself the master of the country from Draa to the Mediterranean he was beset by foreign enemies. The eastern frontier was still menaced by hostile Turks. Mazagan, Tangier and Ceuta were still in Portuguese hands. Also there were Spaniards at Peñon de Velez, but they were a convenient buffer between him and the Turks to whom they appeared to be much more hostile than to the Moors. One never could tell with infidels. Nevertheless, Mohammed ended his life a victim of Moslem intrigue. A body of pretended deserters from the Turkish army, having secured his confidence and been admitted into his service, assassinated him. This was in 1557, the year in which the three-year-old infant Sebastian succeeded to the throne of Portugal.

The reign of the next Shereef, El-Ghaleb, was a period of peace and political stability during which shereefian rule became more firmly established. At his accession he had, according to custom, assassinated all likely rivals for power with the exception of his two half-brothers, Abd el-Malek and Ahmed El-Mansur. He died in 1574 and was succeeded by his son Mulai Mohammed el-Meslukh, who had inherited the dark skin of his slave mother and

was therefore known as El-Mutuakel, the Black Sultan. No lover of war, it was he who had commanded the Moorish army which had failed to capture Mazagan in 1562. But under the Saadian law of succession the throne passed to the eldest male member of the family, not necessarily to the eldest son of a dead shereef. The lawful heir to El-Ghaleb, therefore, was not Mohammed but his uncle, Mulai Abd el-Malek.

Both of Mulai Mohammed's uncles, Abd el-Malek and Ahmed el-Mansur, had grown up among the Turks, first in Tlemcen and later in Algiers, where they were living when they heard of their nephew's accession to a throne to which he had no right. The elder, Abd el-Malek, who was now a man of thirty-two, set out with his mother, Sahaba Errahmania, for Constantinople where they petitioned the Ottoman Sultan, Murad III, to provide them with an army in order to seize the throne which the nephew had usurped. The Sultan refused, but Abd el-Malek and his mother hung about the Ottoman court and pressed their claims with such determination that at last they got the help they wanted. It was, however, conditional on undertakings which Abd el-Malek was loath to give but which he hoped might be repudiated later, anyway in part. The conditions were a cash payment of 500,000 ounces of gold, and promises to join in an aggressive alliance against Spain and to grant Turkish corsairs free use of the Atlantic port of Larache. The undertakings were given, but the cash payment was as much as Abd el-Malek meant to honour.

He returned to Algiers with a letter from Murad ordering the pasha who commanded there to give him the assistance he required to secure the throne of his ancestors. The pasha, a Venetian renegade named Ramdan, whose lieutenant was a Corsican renegade, wanted cash in advance for his services but Abd el-Malek was not in a position to pay. A compromise was arranged and in due course Abd el-Malek marched on Fez with a Turkish army, commanded by Ramdan Pasha, at his back. It was a considerable force, comprising six thousand arquebusiers, a thousand *zouaves*, eight hundred *spahis*, and twelve cannon besides six thousand irregular native horsemen who had rallied to Abd el-Malek's banner.

Mulai Mohammed and his army rode out from Fez to engage his enemy but the battle was lost before it was joined. By a subtle combination of threats and bribes and a well-organised fifth-column, Abd el-Malek had already ensured the betrayal of his adversary. As the two armies met Mohammed was deserted by his Andalusians, Spanish Moors who had fled to Africa where they had for long provided the Moorish armies with their best troops. In March 1576 Abd el-Malek entered Fez unopposed and Mohammed, accompanied by such of his troops as had remained loyal, fled towards Marrakech. Abd el-Malek was prevented from pursuing him by the unseemly clamours of his Turkish allies for the balance of their pay. In no position to meet these demands, he had recourse to borrowing from the reluctant merchants of Fez who were forced to provide the required funds.

Having settled with the disgruntled Turks and sped them on their homeward journey, Abd el-Malek mustered what forces he could and set off in pursuit of Mohammed. He overtook and defeated him, but Mohammed himself escaped southward with 300 arquebusiers and 400 cavalry, which were all that remained of his original force. Abd el-Malek, with an army of 1,500 Andalusians, 2,000 arquebusiers and 1,500 cavalry, followed on their heels but the fugitives, being the smaller force, were able to travel at greater speed. They disappeared across the Atlas Mountains into the difficult and sparsely populated country beyond where they wrought much havoc, especially among the valuable sugar plantations. Mulai Mohammed, an implacable hater of Christians whom he treated brutally whenever they had the misfortune to fall into his hands, now appealed to Portugal for aid. The governor of Mazagan, to whom the appeal was addressed, refused to help him.

Abd el-Malek and his brother El-Mansur, who had been left in command at Fez, vainly scoured the country in the hope of laying hands on Mohammed, but he never remained long enough in one place to be caught. He had, however, more than one narrow escape and was eventually compelled to leave the country accompanied by a mere handful of followers. Making his way north again he succeeded in reaching the Spanish fortress of Peñon de

Velez from where he appealed to Spain for aid. Philip, still determined not to become involved in African affairs and having already established friendly relations with Abd el-Malek, ignored Mohammed's request and made it clear that he was unwelcome on Spanish soil.

Rumours of Sebastian's proposed expeditionary force against Morocco having already reached Mohammed, he next appealed to Portugal. The pretender sent as his envoy a Portuguese captive of noble birth, Antonio da Cunha, who was granted his liberty in return for the service. No appeal could have been more welcome. Antonio da Cunha, taken aback at the King's readiness to champion the fugitive and discredited pretender, endeavoured to dissuade Sebastian from lending ill-merited aid to one with so black a record of tortured Christian captives and one who had been repudiated by his own countrymen. Sebastian rejected this timely but distasteful advice.

On orders from Lisbon a fast caravel was immediately sent to bring Mulai Mohammed to Ceuta where he was welcomed with royal honours by the governor, the Marquis de Villa Real. Mohammed, who was later joined by his young son Mulai ech-Cheikh and a small band of six hundred adherents, was asked to remain awhile in Ceuta and later to go to Tangier to await the arrival of Sebastian and his army.



## The Kingdom of Fez

THE KINGDOM OF FEZ, of which Abd el-Malek was now master, stood at one of the cross-roads of the world, where Europe and Africa, the Mediterranean and the Atlantic all meet. It had inevitably acquired a varied population, as diverse indeed as its physical features and its climate. The original Berber stock, from which it got its Roman name of Barbaria or Barbary, was predominant numerically. Superimposed on the Berbers were the more turbulent Arabs who had come into the country in successive waves since the seventh century. The two races were so much intermixed that many tribes could no longer be classed as either Arab or Berber though some had tenaciously preserved their racial identity. The Arabs had, however, successfully imposed their religion on the Berbers, the only circumstance which gave the country a semblance of unity.

These peoples were loosely organised in tribal and patriarchal units with little or no political cohesion. Their discipline and loyalty to the throne varied in proportion to the accessibility of their habitats from centres of administrative control. Included in the Moslem community were large numbers of Andalusians or Moorish refugees from Spain who represented the best and the worst of Spanish Islam and who had no political organisation.

The racial confusion was increased by an important Jewish element. The Jews were of two origins, Asiatic and European. The former claimed to have come in at the time of the Exodus; the latter had fled from Spain after seven centuries of persecution and, speaking the Spanish tongue, they were often numbered among the Andalusians. The Jews were treated as an inferior class. In the cities, where they were mostly engaged in trade, they were confined to *mellahs* or ghettos and had to wear a distinctive dress.

They were subject to special taxes and were ruled by sheikhs chosen by their Moslem overlords. In consequence of these disabilities many Jews had adopted Islam.

Other elements were a considerable negro slave population, a few Turks, most of whom had come in as deserters from the Ottoman army and had enlisted in the Moorish forces, and a medley of Europeans. Included in the latter were merchants, principally English, French, Spanish and Portuguese, who had settled in such ports as Salee and Mazagan and in Marrakech. There were also Christian soldiers of fortune and other adventurers who had sought service under the sultans. The armed forces included *elches*, who were renegades from Christendom, and possibly a few *frendji* who for centuries had been regularly recruited for service in Africa and were allowed to retain and practise their religion. There were also Europeans who had been captured at sea and sold into slavery. But many captives of the corsairs had apostatized, married local women and settled down permanently in the country as freemen. The European population was also constantly swelled by deserters from the Spanish and Portuguese coastal fortresses, the *presidios* and *fronteiras*, where conditions of life were harder than many could endure.

Such were the various elements of the heterogeneous population which Abd el-Malek had now to govern. The difficulty of the task before him was further increased by the irregular distribution of all these races. Some districts were predominantly Berber, others wholly Arab. Some were purely Andalusian or Spanish-Moorish, others all Jews or Berbers. There were, however, only two great centres of population sufficiently important to influence politics and the administration. These were the ancient cities of Fez and Marrakech, the old northern and southern capitals. Although no longer the administrative capital, Fez was still the more important. Marrakech was the centre of government but the first care of the administration was the control of Fez, still the key to Morocco as it always had been. It owed its importance to a number of natural advantages. These were a central position which commanded easy lines of communication in every direction, the natural fertility of the surrounding country which

made possible the support of a large urban population, a hilly and easily defensible site, and an excellent water supply which its citizens had spared no efforts to develop.

The golden age of Fez had been in the twelfth century under the Merinid sultans whose patronage of literature and art had attracted to their capital students from many parts of the Mohammedan world, notably the *literati* of Moslem Spain among whom were some of the most illustrious scholars of the day. Under their liberal rule the great Karouiine mosque had become a university of world renown. Of the many beautiful buildings with which they enriched their cities the Attarine *medersa*, or religious college, of Fez was the finest, and showed the Merinids to have been worthy contemporaries of the kings of Granada, the creators of the Alhambra. Those who went to Fez for its literature and art brought in their train the craftsmen and merchants of many countries so that its commercial and industrial life prospered with the intellectual.

With the passing of the Merinids Fez began to decay so that by the time Abd el-Malek came to the throne it had long lost much of its glory. But apart from the important loss of the court, life in Fez had probably altered little since it had been vividly described by Leo Africanus at the beginning of the sixteenth century. The activities which had brought it wealth and fame were then still carried on, though the *tempo* was slower. The beauty of the mosques and colleges was untarnished, and their academic activities unabated. They still sent out into the world brilliant scholars of whose crudition Leo himself was a distinguished example. The elaborate system of conduits, cisterns and fountains still conveyed the precious water of the mountain streams into every "temple, college, inn, hospital, and almost to every private house ... whence flowing into the sinks and gutters, it carrieth away all the filth of the city into the river."<sup>1</sup> The water, too, still drove the scores of flour mills designed centuries before by an engineer from Andalusia. The thunder of their stones and wheels constantly filled the air.

<sup>1</sup> Leo Africanus, *The History and Description of Africa* (Hakluyt Society, London, 1896), Vol. II, p. 419.

Comparable in beauty to the colleges were the hospitals for the sick, though men went there to die more often than to be cured. The public baths and the *fonduks*, or caravanserais, were still thronged with townspeople and traders and a host of rogues who preyed upon gullible strangers. A wide variety of diversions was provided by poets, fortune-tellers, witches, conjurors, treasure seekers and snake-charmers. There were also a great number of alchemists "which are mightily addicted to vain practice; they are most base fellows, and contaminate themselves with the steam of sulphur, and other stinking smells ... but their chiefest drift is to coin counterfeit money: for which cause you shall see most of them in Fez with their hands cut off."<sup>1</sup> In spite of an affected atmosphere of piety, there were vintners in the city with whom brothel-keeping was an important side-line.

The craftsmen were in endless variety—needlemakers, scriveners, bleachers, saddlers, spurriers, cartwrights, millwrights and so on. There were Andalusian cross-bow makers. The wood workers were "Christian captives, and whatsoever wages they earn, redoundeth unto their lords and masters. These Christian captives are not suffered to rest from their labours, but only upon Fridays, and upon eight several days of the year besides, whereon the Moors feasts are solemnized".<sup>2</sup> There were also dove keepers, apparently supplying foreign markets for a little after Leo's time Mary Queen of Scots in her last captivity craved for "pigeons from Barbary".

The *élite* of the commercial world of Fez were those who provided the needs of the court and ruling classes. They had their quarter in the city which Leo called the Bourse. They were mostly silk merchants, embroiderers, girdlers, sellers of fine European cloths, tailors—with three streets to themselves—and drapers who made larger profits than any other traders. Close by the Bourse, and perhaps enjoying some reflected respectability, was a street of 150 grocers' and apothecaries shops, "guarded in the night season by certain hired and armed watchmen, which keep their station with lanterns and mastifs."<sup>3</sup> Adjoining the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 469.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 442.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 439.

apothecaries were the physicians but "very few of the people knew either the physician or the use of his physic".

Leo concludes his account of Fez with an apology for its length "but", he adds, "because it is the metropolis not only of Barbary, but of all Africa, I thought good most particularly to decypher every parcel and member thereof."<sup>1</sup> Allowing for the probable exaggeration of one so proud of the city to which he owed his education, it is evident that Fez was then a centre of great intellectual and commercial activity which cannot have greatly diminished by the time the city passed under the sway of Abd el-Malek.

In Leo's day Fez was still the administrative capital and the seat of the court. The country was governed by a horde of parasitic officials. There were the governors of cities and the larger towns who were allowed to retain all the taxes they collected provided they found so many armed horsemen for the sultan's service in time of war. At the other end of the scale were the small men who held grants of land subject to personal service in the armed forces. Each of these officials was largely dependent on what he could make out of his office and he only occupied it so long as the ruling sultan retained his often precarious hold on life and throne. The main body of the people, therefore, were the victims of rapacious governors whose chief thought was to get rich quick. As the collection of taxes, the administration of justice and the command of the local levies were often in the same hands, extortion was as easy as appeal against it was difficult.

Taxes were mostly paid in kind, in the form of corn, cattle, butter and oil, and their incidence was governed by the limits imposed by Mohammedan law. Nevertheless the governors, Leo tells us, "exercised tyranny. For it was not sufficient for them to exact all the forenamed tributes, and riotously to consume the same, but also to urge people unto greater contributions; so that all the inhabitants of Africa are so oppressed with daily exactions, that they have scarcely wherewithal to feed and apparel themselves; for which cause there is almost no man of learning or honesty, that will seek any acquaintance with courtiers, or will

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 486.

invite them to his table, or accept any gifts (be they never so precious) at their hands: thinking that whatsoever goods they have, are gotten by theft and bribery.”<sup>1</sup>

The success or failure of a sultan depended largely upon his ability to choose suitable men for responsible positions and to control them after they had taken up their posts, often in remote and unruly parts of the kingdom. The chief instrument of the royal authority was “a captain of great name, being as it were governor of his guard, who in the king’s name, may compel the judges to do justice, and to put their sentences in execution. This man’s authority is so great, that sometimes he may commit principal noblemen to ward, and may severely punish them according to the king’s commandment.”<sup>2</sup>

Describing the royal household, Leo tells us that the sultan’s maidservants “are negro slaves. ... And yet his queen is always of a white skin. Likewise in the King of Fez his court are certain Christian captives, being partly Spanish, and partly Portugal women, who are most circumspectly kept by certain eunuchs, that are negro slaves.”<sup>3</sup>

The armed forces of the kingdom, to be described later, were closely associated with the court. Leo, who wrote surrounded by the gorgeous pageantry of the Vatican, was contemptuous of Moorish court ceremonial. His account of a royal progress, however, is of unusual interest for it describes a scene which, as the result of the spread of Moorish influence, may still be witnessed both north and south of the Sahara. “When the king is to ride forth, the master of ceremonies signifieth so much unto certain harbingers or posts, whereupon the harbingers give notice thereof unto the king’s kinsmen, unto his nobility, his senators, captains, guardians, and gentlemen, who presently arrange themselves before the palace gate. At the king’s coming forth of the palace, the harbingers appoint unto each man his place and order of riding. First and foremost go the standard-bearers, next the drummers, then followeth the chief groom of the stable with his servants and family: after him comes the king’s pensioners, his guard, his master of ceremonies, his secretaries, his treasurer, and

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 483.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 481.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 482.

last of all his chief judge and his captain general, at length comes the king accompanied with his principal counsellor, or with some other great peer.

"Before the king also ride certain officers belonging to his person, whereof one carries his sword-royal, another his shield, and the third his crossbow. On each side of him march his footmen, one carrying a pair of stirrups, another the king's partisan, the third a covering for his saddle, and the fourth a halter for his horse. And so soon as the king is dismounted, they forthwith cover his saddle, and put the foresaid halter upon his horse-head. Likewise there is another footman that carryeth the king's pantofles most artificially wrought.

"After the king followeth the captain of the footmen, then the eunuchs, the king's family, the light horsemen, and last of all the crossbows and arquebusiers.

"The apparel of the king is then very moderate and plain: inso-much that if a man knew him not, he would think him to be absent: for the attendants be far more sumptuously attired. Moreover no Mohammedan king or prince may wear a crown, diadem, or any such like ornament upon his head, for that is forbidden by the law of Mohammed."<sup>1</sup>

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Marrakech, the Saadian capital, was the bastion of the south, guarding the passes of the Atlas over which turbulent invaders from the Sahara had repeatedly poured into the kingdom of Fez. It was often, however, also the spring-board from which invaders launched their final, and usually successful, attack. That was the purpose for which it had been built in the eleventh century by the Almoravids, and that to which it had been put by the Almohads, the Merinids and the Saadians.

When Marrakech became Abd el-Malek's capital its appearance cannot have differed greatly from that of to-day. The incomparable background of snow-capped mountains, the vivid green girdle of date palms, the rose-coloured walls of the city with their great square bastions and, rising high above them, the superb tower of the Kutubia, of which the more famous Giralda of

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 484.

Seville is a mere copy, must then have combined to present the same unforgettable scene that the traveller enjoys to-day.

Compared with Fez, Marrakech was not rich in artistic treasures, and only for brief periods had it shone in the world of Moslem letters. But in other ways it was more sophisticated, especially in its relationships with Christendom. It was the only place in the interior of the country where Christian merchants were allowed to settle, a privilege of which the merchants of several countries took advantage during the Saadian period. There they were allowed to practice their religious rites and even proselytising in the city was not forbidden. As early as the thirteenth century some Franciscan missionaries had arrived there to preach the gospel and very soon after it became the seat of a bishop. The bishopric survived till Abd el-Malek's day, and for some time later, the see being in the gift of the king of Spain. There was generally a more liberal attitude to life than in Fez and a greater appreciation of the world outside the narrow orbit of Moorish life and politics. This was particularly so under Abd el-Malek's enlightened rule.

Leo's account of the armed forces of the kingdom is of particular relevance to us. The sultan, he tells us "continually maintaineth six thousand horsemen, five hundred cross-bows, and as many arquebusiers, being at all assays prepared for the wars, who in time of peace, when the king goeth on progress, lie within a mile of his person. ... When he wagheth war against the Arabians that be his enemies, because the forenamed garrison is not sufficient, he requireth aid of the Arabians his subjects, who at their own costs find him a great army of men better trained to the wars, than his own soldiers beforementioned."<sup>1</sup>

It will be recalled that each of the great governors or fief holders enjoyed the revenue of their provinces subject to their contributing an agreed number of horsemen for the sultan's service in time of war. There were minor officers of whom similar service was required. "Moreover the king of Fez", continues Leo, "maintaineth a troop of light horsemen, who so long as they serve the king in his camp, have their diet allowed them out of the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 483.



king's provision: but in time of peace, he findeth them corn, butter, and pouldered flesh for the whole year, but money they have very seldom. Once a year they are appalled at the king's cost; neither do they provide for their horses either within the city or without, for the king furnisheth them with all necessaries. Those that give attendance to their horses are Christian captives, which go shackled in great chains and fetters. But when the army removeth any whither, the said Christians are carried upon camels' backs. Another officer there is that giveth attendance only to the camels. ... Each camel-driver hath two camels, which are laden with the king's furniture, according to the appointment of the governor.

"Likewise the king hath a certain purveyor or steward, whose office is to provide, keep, and distribute corn both to the king's household and to his army. This man in time of war hath ten or twelve tents to lay up corn in, and every day with change of camels he sendeth for new corn, lest the army should be unprovided of victuals; he hath also cooks at his command. Moreover there is a governor or master-groom of the stables, who provideth for the king's horses, mules, and camels. ... There is another also appointed overseer of the corn, whose duty it is to provide barley and other provender for the beasts. . .

"Also there is another that taketh charge of the carriages and baggage of the army, and causeth the tents of the light horsemen to be carried up and down on mules, and the tents of the other soldiers on camels. There are likewise a company of ensign-bearers, who in marching on a journey carry their colours wrapped up: but he that goeth before the army hath his banner displayed, and of a great height. And every one of the said standard-bearers knoweth most exactly all ways, fords of rivers, and passages through woods, wherefore they are for the most part appointed to guide the army. The drummers (of whom there are great store in the king's host) play upon certain drums of brass as big as a great kettle, the lower part whereof is narrow, and the upper broad, being covered with a skin. These drummers ride on horseback, having always on the one side of their horses a great weight hanging down, to counterpoise the heaviness of their

drums on the other side. They are allowed most swift horses, because the Moors account it a great disgrace to loose a drum. The said drums make such a loud and horrible noise, that they are not only heard afar off, but also strike exceeding terror both upon the men and horses, and they are beaten only with a bull's pizzle . . . <sup>1</sup>

"When the king lieth with his army in the fields, first his own great tent is pitched in a four square form like unto a castle . . . This royal pavilion hath four gates, every one of which is kept by eunuchs. Within the said pavilion are contained divers other tents, among which is the king's lodging, being framed in such wise, that it may easily be removed from place to place. Next unto it stand the tents of the noblemen . . . Next of all are the stables, wherein their horses are marvellous well tended. Without this circuit keep such as carry the tents and the king's furniture from place to place. Here are also butchers, victuallers, and such like. All merchants and artificers that resort hither, take up their abode next unto the tent-carriers: so that the king's pavilion is pitched like a strong city, for it is so environed with the lodgings of the guard, and with other tents adjoining, that there is very difficult passage to the king."<sup>2</sup> The victualling of the army was the duty of the innkeepers of Fez who were organised under an official and had to pay a special tax to the governor of the city.

Abd el-Malek had absorbed many Turkish ideas during his exile and had been particularly influenced by Ottoman military methods. He probably left the general organisation of the Moorish fighting forces undisturbed, but he introduced *peiks* and *solaks* which were special features of the Ottoman household troops. The duties of the *peiks*, who were foreigners—either Turks, renegades or Christians—included the guarding of the shereef's tent and they had to furnish the royal umbrella carrier. They wore yellow helmets decorated with a multi-coloured aigrette of dyed ostrich-feathers. We know little of the *solak's* duties; they were closely attached to the royal person and marched behind the *peiks* and, like them, they were wholly recruited from among foreigners. But their appearance was even more striking. Their

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 480-482.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 485.



A BARBARY GALLEY

From an engraving by Jan Lukycn in *Pierre Dan's Historie van Barbaryen*, Amsterdam 1684



MARRAKECH

From O. Dapper's *Description de L'Afrique*, Amsterdam 1686

head-dress was surmounted with a panache of undyed ostrich plumes, which flowed down their backs, and round their waists they wore a sort of apron of the same feathers.

Another spectacular feature of the household troops was the *beleberdouch* or halberdiers. They were a *corps d'élite* of European renegades and formed the bodyguard of the shereef. They wore Byzantine head-dresses and carried gilded halberds. Their introduction into the Moorish army dated only from 1559 when Philip II of Spain had made a gift of thirty halberdiers to Mulai Abdallah el-Ghalib.

The organisation of the court, of the administration and of the armed forces was in the main traditional and cannot have altered materially since Leo Africanus described it at the beginning of the century.

*Mulai Abd el-Malek*

**I**N A REIGN of a little over two years Abd el-Malek proved himself to be one of the most enlightened rulers the Moors had ever had. Both he and his brother Ahmed el-Mansur, who was to succeed him, had inherited much of the ability of their father, Mohammed ech-Cheikh, under whom the Saadians had extended their dominion over nearly the whole of Morocco. Both played an important part in the history of their country and gave it a prestige in Europe which no purely African state had previously enjoyed.

They also owed much, by birth and upbringing, to their mother, Sahaba Errahmania, whose triumph over all the circumstances which in those times forbade a Moslem woman to play any part in public affairs showed her to be endowed with exceptional intelligence and determination. Abd el-Malek had been fifteen years old at the accession of his half-brother Abdallah el-Ghalib in 1557. He and his younger brother had fled with their mother to Algiers to escape the knife and bow-string which, in customary oriental style, cut short the lives of all other possible claimants to the throne. In Algiers they enjoyed Turkish protection and completed their education under the wise guidance of their mother. One cannot doubt that it was largely due to her influence that in eighteen years of exile in Turkish dominions they did not become assimilated into the Ottoman community. They never lost the traditional hatred of the Moor, whether Berber or Arab, for the Turk. On the other hand they discerned and absorbed the good as they rejected the bad in Turkish manners and customs. When the Saadian throne was usurped by their nephew Mohammed and all depended upon securing Turkish aid, it was their mother who played the decisive part in the negotiations with Murad in Constantinople.

Abd el-Malek returned from his long exile—the last two years of which appear to have been largely spent in Constantinople—with a mind surprisingly free from anti-Christian prejudices. Although the Turks had for so long been at war with Christian Europe they did not, as we know, eschew contact or abhor alliances with Christian states. The treaties which they negotiated with the treacherous Francis I and the mercenary Venetians were dictated by self-interest, and did not arise from any feelings of sympathy for infidels.

On becoming the ruler of a people who had long been intolerant of Christians, Abd el-Malek quickly showed that he intended following a more liberal foreign policy. His strong European sympathies cannot have been due to Ottoman influence for they were foreign to Turkish ideas. They appear to have been the outcome of the respect which had been awakened in him by the close study of European politics which he had pursued in Algiers and Constantinople. As we look back on the wars of religion with which Europe had long been racked and recall the black treachery and degrading poverty which characterised most Christian states, there seems to have been little to excite admiration. But Abd el-Malek was viewing Europe from Turkey which, since the death of the great Suleiman, had been ruled by two sultans each of whom had brought discredit on their country and contempt on themselves. Selim the Sot and Murad III were the first of the decadent line which was ultimately to ruin Turkey. Under the influence of these contemptible rulers the country may well have presented to Abd el-Malek a spectacle in comparison with which the Christian scene, for all its faults, commanded a measure of respect.

From the scraps of information which have come down to us it is evident that the new shereef had a diverse and possibly an extensive knowledge of European affairs. He understood the differences which divided the Catholic and Protestant communions and their influence on international relations, especially between Spain and England. He had a low opinion of Philip II because he believed, quite wrongly, that the real rulers of Spain were the Pope and the Inquisition. For England, on the other

hand, he had a friendly feeling which, although traditional with the Saadians, was attributed to the simplicity of the Protestant faith which was naturally less repellent to a Moslem than the more elaborate Catholic ritual.

Abd el-Malek adopted many Turkish manners and customs, including the wearing of Turkish dress which he encouraged among his people. Nevertheless, in a number of small ways he showed a keen interest in European life and culture. He was acquainted with the Old and New Testaments. He could converse in Spanish and was said to know something of Italian. He recruited his court musicians in England, which at this time was without its equal in the musical world. He occasionally dated his letters according to the Christian calendar, and in the British Museum there is a document to which he put his signature in Latin characters, the only record of a Moorish sultan signing his name thus.<sup>1</sup> He also acquired a taste for European sports. Elizabeth's ambassador, Edmund Hogan, tells how he took the Shereef "ducking with water-spaniels and baiting bulls with English dogs."<sup>2</sup>

Abd el-Malek's European ways were probably acquired after his accession from the Europeans with whom he quickly surrounded himself. It was not unusual at this period to find Europeans in positions of trust in the service of Moslem rulers but they were usually renegades. The most famous was Mohammed Sokolli, Suleiman's great minister. Ramdan Pasha, the Turkish governor of Algiers, and his Corsican lieutenant have already been mentioned. For such men return to their native land was probably impossible. Abd el-Malek, on the other hand, employed Europeans who were free to come and go as they pleased, and he often sent them on foreign missions. The Englishman Hogan, a

<sup>1</sup> British Museum—*Additional MSS.*, 28359, f. 324.

<sup>2</sup> The English were already famous for their dogs, which were in demand among foreigners. In 1582 the Levant Company recommended the Queen to send the sultan of Turkey a present which should include mastifs, greyhounds, water-spaniels, bloodhounds and five little spaniels "all with collars". E. P. Cheyney, *A History of England from the Defeat of the Armada to the Death of Elizabeth*, London 1914. I. p. 380.



frequent visitor to the shereefian court, found him surrounded by Christians as well as Moorish counsellors, and the names of several have come down to us. One was Cabrette, a French sea-captain who was sent on confidential missions to the French and Spanish courts. A Spanish priest named Diego Marin was used in a similar capacity. Another important member of the household was Berard, the French surgeon-barber whom the Shereef had met in Constantinople and brought with him to Morocco and whom he later appointed his ambassador at the French court. There was another French surgeon-barber residing in Marrakech, William of Marseilles, who enjoyed a commission of two per cent on all goods shipped from Morocco to France. A Spanish Franciscan from Seville, Luis de Sandoval, occupied the confidential post of secretary to the Shereef. A European who was closely associated with him from his accession and who appears to have been a close friend was the Spaniard Andrea Gasparo Corso. This man had a brother, Francisco, who occupied an official position in Valencia. That the two brothers kept each other closely informed about what was afoot on either side of the Straits caused no misgiving to Abd el-Malek who sent Andrea, together with Cabrette and Father Diego Marin, on a friendly mission to Madrid. Francisco was unquestionably used as a source of information about Morocco by Philip II who also had his own Moorish agent, El-Hadj el-Marin—"neustro Moro" Philip called him—whom he had bought as a slave.

The Shereef gave practical expression to his liking for Europeans in many ways. He earned wide respect in Europe by his generous treatment of the many Christian captives who fell into the hands of his marauding corsairs. They were charitably treated and protected from undue hardship. During his brief reign he released large numbers free of ransom—on a single occasion as many as two hundred. He also built a hospital for Europeans in Marrakech, close to the principal mosque. This magnanimity was as surprising to Europe as it was bewildering to his co-religionists to whom these infidel associations naturally did not commend their shereef. The Christian Church, however, did not neglect to make known its gratitude. A panegyric of the Shereef composed by a Preaching

Friar in 1577 read: "May our Lord God keep him in peace and may He increase his power and dominions for long years to come, may He grant him perpetual victories, may He raise him to the highest position, for the honour of God who lives and reigns world without end."

Abd el-Malek's exile had afforded him ample opportunity for studying the art of war of which the Ottoman Turks were such accomplished masters. The decay in Ottoman fortunes which is often said to have dated from Suleiman's death did not in fact begin till some years later. This was not due to the insignificant capabilities of his successor, Selim II, but to the good fortune that that dissolute monarch retained the services of his father's Grand Vizier, Mohammed Sokolli. Chaos was averted and the country saved from disaster by the ability of this great statesman. The glorious military traditions established by Suleiman and his predecessors were not allowed to fade with his death. The Hungarian war, in the waging of which Suleiman had lost his life, was brought to an end by a negotiated peace with the Emperor Maximilian. This left Sokolli free to resume the war against Philip II of Spain who was already fully occupied with the Morisco rebellion in the Alpujarras and the revolt in the Netherlands.

When, in 1569, Philip of Spain lost Tunis to the Turkish pasha of Algiers Abd el-Malek was living in Algiers and may well have taken part in the expedition. The Turkish conquest of Cyprus quickly followed. On its heels came the disaster at Lepanto and then the astonishing recovery of the Ottoman navy. In 1574 the Turkish admiral, Aluch Ali, sailed out of the Golden Horn with a fleet of 200 galleys bound for Tunis and carrying a force of 20,000 janissaries. In one of those galleys were Abd el-Malek and his dauntless mother. They saw Tunis once more recovered from Spain for whom it had been recaptured by Don John in the previous year. Those briefly were the military adventures with which the Turks were occupied while Abd el-Malek was their guest and preparing himself to recover the throne of his fathers. The opportunities they provided for the study of the unique Ottoman military system were not wasted.

It was after, rather than before, the overthrow of the usurper Mohammed that Abd el-Malek had most reason to be thankful for the experience he had gained during his exile. His position was far from secure. Fez was implacably hostile to his house and there was an ever present danger of rebellion among the many turbulent tribes which made up his ill-knit kingdom. To these domestic cares was added the grave menace of attack by two of his neighbours, Portugal and the Ottoman Turks.

Two years had elapsed since Sebastian's unsuccessful expedition to Tangier. His threatened return with a much larger force had not yet taken place, but the Shereef knew that plans for invasion were still going forward in Lisbon. It was an imminent and disturbing prospect. The Turkish danger was as serious and, to him personally, more embarrassing. The Turks had repeatedly claimed a reversionary right to Morocco and the only reason for their not having occupied it was the Porte's inability to spare the necessary troops. But the Shereef owed his throne to Turkish arms and sooner or later would be required to honour the undertakings which had been the price of that aid. He would be called upon to give the Turks the use of Larache harbour and to commit his people to a war against Spain. The admission of the Turks to the Atlantic seaboard would mean a forfeit of sovereignty which might well lead to loss of independence. And to allow Larache to become a corsair base would both aggravate the hostility of Portugal and excite that of Philip. War with Spain, even with Turkey as an ally, would inevitably be disastrous. In the improbable event of a Moslem victory the Moors would be bled white and all the prizes would go to their senior partner in the alliance.

The Portuguese and Turkish menaces were the two cares which most occupied Abd el-Malek's mind in the early months of his reign. Before he could prepare to repel the Portuguese he must rid himself of his Turkish commitments. In November 1576 he turned to France and Spain for aid, sending Cabrette as his envoy. The appeal to Henry III was rejected. But it was Spanish aid that the Shereef particularly wanted for he believed that Philip had the power to restrain Sebastian and to prevent his expedition ever

sailing for Africa. Some months of suspense had yet to pass before Philip would allow Cabrette to return with his answer.

There was another matter weighing heavily on the Shereef's mind. Whatever the outcome of his diplomatic approach to Philip, and even if an invasion by Portugal were averted, it was evident he would not be able to impose his authority on his unruly subjects unless it was backed by force of arms. The recent civil war had left the shereefian armoury sadly depleted. It must be quickly replenished to meet the ever present domestic needs of so turbulent a country, and on a big enough scale to ensure that the shereefian army would be adequately equipped to counter the assaults which the Turks and the Portuguese were threatening. Abd el-Malek wasted no time in seeking a solution to the problem of this compelling need.

## Queen Elizabeth's Secret

FOR MANY YEARS English trade with Morocco and Guinea had been a cause of friction between England and Portugal. The Portuguese claimed that under the bull of Pope Alexander VI, which partitioned the world between Portugal and Spain, no one had any right to trade with Africa except themselves. But they were unable to oust the English merchants. Their protests to Elizabeth were persistently ignored and the papal bull defied.

The Portuguese were infuriated more by the nature of the Moroccan trade, which was centred in the ports of Safi and Agadir,<sup>1</sup> than by the ignominy of having to endure interlopers in a field regarded as their own. Reference has already been made to the long established English trade in sugar with Morocco. The fondness of the English for sweets was a constant astonishment to foreigners who attributed to it Queen Elizabeth's black teeth, a disfigurement which she shared with many of her subjects. In exchange for this sugar the English supplied the Moors with pikes, lances, coats of mail, helmets, metal for casting cannon, ammunition for small arms and artillery, sulphur, timber for building ships, and a variety of marine gear such as oars, cordage and sails.

It was this arms traffic which the Portuguese resented and here they had a semblance of moral right on their side. That there could be no peace between Islam and Christendom was a basic Moslem principle. One pope after another had therefore prohibited the sale of munitions of war by Christians to Mohammedans. Shipbuilding materials, which were wanted by the corsairs,

<sup>1</sup> Safi was the port of Marrakech, the Saadian capital. Under the Merinids, when Fez was the capital, the English naturally used Larache. Agadir owed its importance to the trade in sugar which was produced in the neighbouring district of Sus.

were expressly classed as munitions. To the fury of the Portuguese Elizabeth of England, who had a personal interest in this as in much of the other foreign trade of her people, paid as little heed to these prohibitions as she did to the bull of Alexander VI. The French, whose merchants were similarly engaged, though on a minor scale, were no less obdurate. So the arms trade went on in defiance of Portugal and Rome.

As far back as 1541, when the Portuguese were driven out of Agadir, they had attributed their defeat to the English and French merchants who, they declared, in defiance of the laws of God and man had shipped such quantities of arms to the Moors that they were better armed, especially in artillery, and better equipped than the Christians. That was thirty-five years before Abd el-Malek's succession. Since then the trade had prospered and it may well have been that Sebastian had found his men to be less well armed than his adversaries when in 1574 he was fighting outside the walls of Tangier.

But this was not the only cause of resentment among the Portuguese. Philip looked to them to stop the trade, which was very embarrassing. "I cannot believe", read a letter addressed from London to the Grand Commander of Castile in May 1574 "that the King (of Portugal) will allow English heretics to go there and trade with the Moors, carrying there, as they constantly do, great quantities of arms, to the prejudice of the King (of Spain) and his subjects".<sup>1</sup>

Elizabeth set great store by this trade. The sugar business was lucrative and so was the sale of arms and marine gear. There was also great satisfaction in helping the traditional enemies of Catholic Spain and Portugal. Nevertheless the Queen had already begun to weaken in her resistance to the constant complaints of Francisco Giraldi, the Portuguese ambassador in London. This did not come from fear of, or consideration for, Portugal but out of the need to placate Philip whose hostility to Elizabeth was undisguised. At no distant date he might be able to enforce his claim to the throne of Portugal. He had therefore to be treated as the guardian of Portuguese interests.

<sup>1</sup> *Calendar of State Papers, Spanish, 1568-79*, p. 481.

An affront to Portugal was an affront to Philip who had just been offered an insult which the embarrassed Queen, and her still more embarrassed minister Burghley, felt had pushed the Prudent King to the limit of endurance. That was the exploit of Francis Drake who had recently returned from his famous *Nombre de Dios* expedition bringing with him a large part of the bullion which the bankrupt Philip and his pressing creditors in Augsburg and Genoa were anxiously awaiting from the Indies. It had been obtained by force from a country with which England was nominally at peace. The chief pirate and his associates were unpunished and in free enjoyment of the immense fortunes which had been the fruits of their crime.

Moreover, Philip's adoption of a policy of conciliation in the Low Countries had eased one of his greatest cares and temporarily freed his hands. News had reached London of a fleet building at Santander for the capture of the Scilly Isles and possibly the seizure of an English port. The Pope had recently given a fresh and disturbing fillip to rebellion in Ireland, where Spanish money and arms were believed to be helping the rebels. The position was critical but concessions to Portugal might placate Spain and relieve the tension between Elizabeth and Philip.

In May 1574 Elizabeth agreed to forbid her subjects to trade with the African coast south of Cape Blanco, thus surrendering any claim to participation in the Guinea trade. At the same time she undertook to stop trafficking in arms with the Moors north of the cape. To what extent these undertakings, which were given to Giraldi by Burghley, were honoured is not as clear as one could wish. It is certain that only a few months later Elizabeth attempted unsuccessfully to wriggle out of her renunciation of the munitions trade. On the other hand, a complaint from some old established Moroccan merchants that interlopers were still secretly trading in arms suggests that she had honestly tried to stop it. Moreover, at the beginning of 1577, when Giraldi complained that ships of the Easterlings or Hansa merchants were sending munitions to the Moors in ships carrying English officers,<sup>1</sup> orders were immediately

<sup>1</sup> This had anyway been going on since 1574. *Calendar of State Papers, Spanish 1568-79*, p. 486.

issued by the Privy Council to the Lord Admiral "that the said masters and pilots be commanded not to take in hand or accomplish any such voyage."

In the following month Edmund Hogan or Huggins, a London merchant trading with Morocco, who has already been mentioned, appeared before the Privy Council to answer a charge of being a conveyor of "iron, shot and pellets" to the Moors. The charge had been brought by Giraldi who alleged that Hogan's agent, John Williams, had recently sold thirty tons of cannon balls to the Shereef in exchange for sugar and saltpetre, and that other English merchants had been shipping oars and artillery to Morocco.<sup>1</sup> There is no record of the Privy Council proceedings, but Hogan appears to have been acquitted, for later in the same month he drew up an important memorandum pressing for the removal of the ban on the Moorish arms traffic.

The memorandum was dated March 1577, when Abd el-Malek was already established on his throne. This is the story it told: About five years before, Hogan had sent his agent, John Williams, to Hamburg to obtain saltpetre of which Elizabeth was then in need. Saltpetre had, however, become so scarce and the price so high, probably on account of war in the Low Countries, that he could not buy any and he was equally unsuccessful in Lubeck and Danzig. Williams returned with some thin linen cloth which proved unsaleable in England and it was therefore sent out to Morocco in the hope that the Moors might buy it. The man entrusted with this business, probably Williams himself, found that there was still saltpetre in Morocco, obtained from four different mines in the southern part of the country, but that its sale was prohibited owing to the supply being reserved for the exclusive use of the Shereef, Mulai Mohammed. Attempts to overcome the difficulty failed until an appeal was made direct to Mohammed who eventually agreed that if Hogan would supply him with ammunition for his artillery he should have all the saltpetre he wanted. Specifications for the pellets, as Elizabethans called cannon balls, and a sample of the saltpetre were sent to London. England's need must have been pressing for the sample was at once

<sup>1</sup> *Calendar of State Papers, Foreign 1578-79*, p. 476.



examined by the Lord Treasurer himself and then sent on to Kenilworth Castle for inspection by the Earls of Warwick and Leicester.

That Elizabethan England lacked an adequate supply of so vital a munition of war as saltpetre was due partly to the country having lagged far behind Europe in the use of fire-arms, the result of the unshakeable faith of the English in their justly famous long-bow, and partly to domestic difficulties in its manufacture. The short effective range of the arquebus (about 100 yards), the difficulty of keeping its slow-match alight in boisterous or rainy weather, its weight, which seriously reduced mobility, and its high cost were some of the objections which in English opinion rendered it inferior to the long-bow, their traditional weapon, in the use of which they had no equal. The long-bow had twice the range, it was unaffected by weather, very mobile, cheap and easy to replace and, unlike the arquebus, it could be loosed simultaneously by several ranks. In 1544, when the arquebus was in general use on the Continent, England's 28,000 foot included less than 2,000 arquebusiers. Bowmen continued to be recruited into the English army as late as the last decade of the century. It was not therefore till long after most other European countries had given up the bow for the arquebus that England had much need for gunpowder, except for artillery. The comparatively small quantity of powder required was obtained from the Continent where most countries had their own gunpowder mills.

Before Elizabeth's time the English carried stocks of gunpowder in their own warehouses abroad, especially in Antwerp. But they could not import the powder without the authority of the government of the country in which the stocks were held. Thus Mary had had to obtain the King of Spain's permission to draw upon the supplies of powder and of its ingredients which she was holding in the Low Countries. In Elizabeth's reign this situation was of course intolerable in the face of her relations with Philip. Thus powder mills came first to be established in England in her reign. She had never been free of dependence on the Continent because the maintenance of an adequate supply was made very difficult by her shortage of saltpetre or nitre, the most important ingredient of gunpowder.

There were no known deposits of saltpetre or nitre in Europe and it had to be imported from the East, mostly from India and Persia. It was therefore costly and never in abundant supply. A method of producing it artificially had, however, been devised on the Continent but the secret had been successfully concealed from Englishmen. In 1561, however, a German captain, Gerrard Honrick, sold the secret to Elizabeth for £300 and undertook to instruct her subjects in the art.<sup>1</sup> The process consisted in mixing earth and animal excrement with lime and ashes. The compound was then exposed to the air in dry cold places and watered at intervals with urine. Eventually, and after the heaps had been turned many times, the saltpetre crystallized out.

The process was simple enough, but Elizabeth was not at the end of her troubles over her supplies. The next difficulty was to obtain sufficient animal matter to secure enough saltpetre for her needs. Her subjects were compelled to permit the saltpetre men to dig out the earth in all dovehouses, barns, stables, stalls, cellars and so on. They had also to provide transport for the saltpetre. The people naturally resented the intrusions of the saltpetre men whose activities were so harmful to their buildings and disturbing to themselves. Complaints and criticisms were therefore frequent.<sup>2</sup>

The news that saltpetre was to be had in Morocco raised hopes of establishing a new and independent source of supply, so Hogan's sample was naturally examined with very keen interest.

The quality proved acceptable, so some cannon balls were sent out to Morocco "for a proof". These were probably the thirty tons for which Hogan had been haled before the Privy Council. The trial shipment reached Morocco during the struggle between Mulai Mohammed and Abd el-Malek. The matter was dropped until the latter, successfully established on the throne, found himself short of ammunition. He then sent for Williams and another English merchant, John Bampton, both of whom were trading in Marrakech, and told them that if they would supply him with

<sup>1</sup> *Calendar of State Papers. Domestic 1547-80* p. 172.

<sup>2</sup> M.S. Giuseppi. *Gunpowder, The Victoria County History of Surrey*, Vol. II. London 1905.

cannon balls he would give them an exclusive licence to buy saltpetre or copper or anything else they wanted. The only condition was that the saltpetre should not be allowed to pass into Portuguese or Spanish hands. The offer was accepted and confirmed in a letter which Abd el-Malek sent by John Williams to Elizabeth. That letter and the Queen's reply, like almost every other official document relating to the arms traffic at this time, have disappeared from British archives. It is quite clear, however, that the Queen, regardless of her undertaking to Portugal, was prepared to connive at the resumption of the arms traffic on a grand scale. Not only were English merchants to supply the Shereef with cannon balls and other munitions in exchange for the much needed saltpetre, but arrangements were made to lend him English gun founders.

The object of Hogan's memorandum was to pave the way for an alliance between England and Morocco which had been suggested by Abd el-Malek in a letter to Elizabeth, the bearer of which was Hogan's agent, John Williams. The eagerness of the Queen's acceptance of the proposal, the precipitancy with which she acted, her repeated insistence on the strictest secrecy and the evident care which was taken to destroy every relevant record are among the circumstances which leave no room for doubt as to the nature of the proposed alliance. It was to be a secret agreement which would ensure to the Queen her saltpetre and to the Moors the munitions which she had undertaken not to let them have.

Elizabeth immediately sent an ambassador to Morocco to negotiate the agreement. The man she chose was none other than Edmund Hogan, the merchant whom Giraldi had accused of illicitly trafficking in arms. Within two months of Hogan's appearance before the Privy Council he had set sail for Morocco as Elizabeth's ambassador.

Hogan carried with him the Queen's written instructions, but if his mission had really been limited to these there would have been little reason for his going and none at all for the hurry in which he was sent. Apart from righting abuses of which some English merchants had complained, all Hogan had to do, according to the Queen's letter, was to tell the Shereef that he could on no account

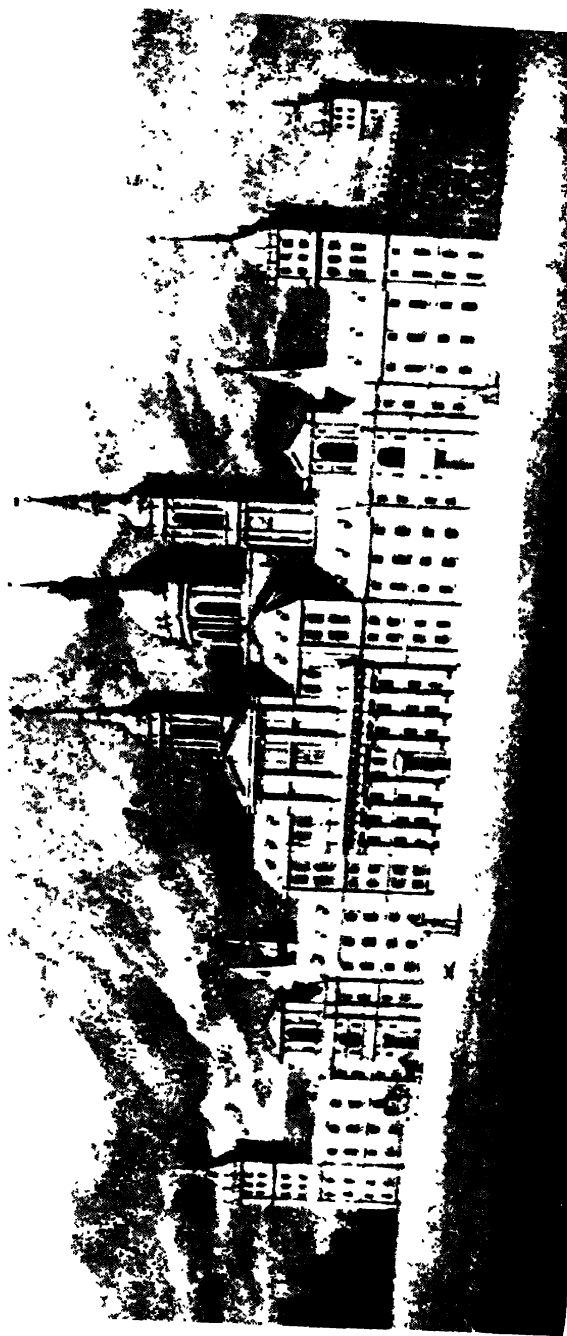
obtain munitions of war from England. She returned repeatedly to this injunction. Hogan was not to mention Abd el-Malek's need for artillery or munitions "which we can neither in honour or conscience yield unto." If the Shereef raised the question Hogan was to declare "how much it importeth us, both in honour and safety, to yield to any such request having regard to such leagues as ... we presently have with other Christian princes." If this did not satisfy the Shereef he was to be told that "in case we should consent to his demands ... we should draw the hatred of all Christian princes" thus involving the country in war and its trade in ruin. Hogan's instructions were obviously a blind, carefully prepared for the prying eyes of Giraldi.

Hogan's report on his mission shows him to have had all the arrogance of the vulgar merchant turned ambassador. "Accompanied with the French and English merchants", he wrote, "and a great number of soldiers, I passed towards the city (of Marra-kech) ... there met me all the Christians of the Spaniards and Portugals to receive me, which I know was more by the king's commandment than of any goodwills of themselves: for some of them, although they speak me fair, hung down their heads like dogs, and especially the Portugals, and I countenanced them accordingly."

Abd el-Malek, he went on, "seemed to have so good liking of me, that he took from his girdle a short dagger being set with 200 stones, rubies and turkies, and did bestow it upon me ... I was dismissed with great honour and special countenance, such as hath not ordinarily been showed to other ambassadors of the Christians."<sup>1</sup>

The unusual deference shown to Hogan was very provoking to the Portuguese. Giraldi made a ridiculous protest to Walsingham. "I wish respectfully to inform you", he wrote, "that this city (London) is full of the reception given by that tyrant the Shereef to her Majesty's ambassador; how he went to meet him, and honoured him with this name by word of mouth, ... Also the thousands of stores and arms which that Ughens (Hogan) has taken in

<sup>1</sup> Richard Hakluyt. *Principal Navigations*, Glasgow 1904, VI, pp. 285-293.



THE ESCORIAL

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GUADALUPE: THE CONVENT OF THE JERONIMOS

the galleon and two other smaller vessels, which I am certain was little to the taste of the King, my master.”<sup>1</sup>

From Hogan's report it is obvious that the Queen had given him instructions other than those which she had committed to writing. Whereas the latter discreetly omitted any mention of saltpetre it was three times referred to in Hogan's report and was evidently much discussed between him and the Shereef. Saltpetre was in fact already being supplied to the English, but there is not a hint that Abd el-Malek had become any less insistent that he would only part with it in exchange for munitions, his need for which was as great as ever.

Equally significant was Hogan's reference to having delivered Sir Thomas Gresham's letters to the Shereef. Gresham, a son of London's famous Lord Mayor, had long held the important office of Queen's Merchant. A part of his duties was the purchase of saltpetre, gunpowder and sundry arms required by the Crown. When five years earlier Hogan's agent, John Williams, was enquiring for saltpetre in Hamburg it was at the instance of Sir Thomas Gresham. There is little room for doubt that the letters he entrusted to Hogan for the Shereef were in the same connection.

That secret negotiations were going on is confirmed in the last paragraph of the report. "Touching the private affairs intreated upon betwixt her Majesty and the Emperor", it reads, "I had letters from him to satisfy her Highness therein." From later correspondence it appears that the Shereef's letters to Elizabeth contained a promise to send his own ambassador to England. In thanking him for this she begged him to keep the matter secret, evidently fearful lest her association with him should become known and its true purpose suspected. But this cannot have been the principal subject of the letters. The "private affairs" the Shereef wrote about must have been something which had been initiated earlier. His letters, like Gresham's, have not survived.

The disappearance of all official records bearing directly on the

<sup>1</sup> *Calendar of State Papers, Foreign* 1577-78, p. 68.

A letter dated 1st June 1574 (London) from a Spaniard to the Grand Commander of Castile refers to "bribes promised and the efforts made by Giraldi". *Calendar of State Papers, Spanish* 1568-79, p. 483.

secret agreement between Elizabeth and Abd el-Malek cannot be dismissed as a mere coincidence, for in all other respects the contemporary Moroccan documents in British archives are singularly complete. The absence of any record of Hogan's appearance before the Privy Council and the survival of the spurious instructions he was given by the Queen show the lengths to which Elizabeth went to conceal from Portugal the breach of her undertaking, not for fear of Portugal but of Philip of Spain. The very friendliness of the Shereef was embarrassing and his expressed intention of sending an ambassador of his own to London seriously frightened her. She promised to show the ambassador all the honour she could but "we beg that for many good reasons", she wrote, "you will send him secretly, so that his coming may not be in any way known."<sup>1</sup>

Mendoza, the Spanish Ambassador in London, also had his suspicions. "There is a ship here", he wrote to Philip, "ready to go to Barbary with a great number of dogs and well-trained horses on board, and some dresses, presents for the king of Fez ... The assertion is made that they are going to bring back saltpetre, but there is a certain Julio here who claims to be descended from the princes of Jaranto and who, it is thought, is a Morisco. He speaks eight or nine languages beautifully and is closeted for hours every day with Leicester and Walsingham, and sometimes with the Queen. I do not know what he is up to, but it is believed that he will go in this ship."<sup>2</sup>

Whatever Giraldi and Mendoza may have suspected, they had no certain knowledge of what had taken place. Abd el-Malek had secured the munitions he needed, and Elizabeth had got her saltpetre, but at great risk and on terms dictated by the astute Moor.

<sup>1</sup> *Calendar of State Papers, Foreign* 1577-78, p. 135.

<sup>2</sup> *Calendar of State Papers, Spanish* 1568-79, p. 591.



## *The Meeting at Guadalupe*

THE FEAR of invasion from Africa which had haunted Philip II during the dark and anxious days of the Alpujarras rebellion had been much aggravated by the westward march of the Ottoman Turks. Although the rebels had not received the help they had expected from Africa, by various pretences, such as dressing up as Turks, they had persuaded Philip and others that they had. A despatch from Cadiz informed Elizabeth of England that the rebellion was receiving support from both Turkey and Barbary, and some months later Robert Hogan, the Queen's agent in Madrid, repeated the story with greater circumstance, reporting the capture by Spanish galleys of eighteen galiots and other ships taking stores and munitions to the rebels. So Philip's worst fear was kept alive, and his peace of mind did not return with the long delayed collapse of the rebellion. The Turks were approaching the Atlantic seaboard whence they might well intend flinging themselves upon Spain. Indeed, their programme was reported to be first the capture of Fez and then an invasion of Europe.

In March 1576, when Philip was anxiously watching events across the narrows, someone had pressed him to anticipate events by sending an army to aid the Moorish sultan, Mulai Mohammed, who was then being threatened by Abd el-Malek and his Turkish allies. It was suggested that the combined forces of Spain and Mulai Mohammed might not only stay the advance of the Turks but even drive them from their advance base at Algiers, from where they were threatening Philip's kingdom of Naples.

Sebastian, too, was watching North Africa and with no less interest, but for a different reason. For him there was no African menace. Across the Straits there were only infidels to conquer and glory to be won. He well knew Philip's fears and hoped to further

his own project by playing upon them. Western Morocco, where he had long planned to land his army, was within the zone allotted to Portugal. If therefore Philip could be persuaded to join with him in that enterprise the conquered territory would go to Portugal and not to Spain. Conversely, Philip must be discouraged from an attack on Algiers or on any other point on the Mediterranean seaboard lying within the Spanish zone.

In April, when Fez had already fallen to Abd el-Malek, Sebastian sent an ambassador to Madrid to propose a joint attack on Larache by Spain and Portugal as the best means of holding up the Turks and protecting Spain from invasion. The envoy was to emphasise—and exaggerate, in case of need—the advantages offered by Larache: its magnificent harbour, fine natural defences and general suitability as a base for further operations. He was to dwell upon the dangers of continued inaction. If Larache fell into Turkish hands navigation along the Atlantic seaboard would become impossible for Christian nations and the recapture of the port might well prove impossible. On the heels of this ambassador Sebastian sent a second with the more definite proposal that Philip's contribution to the joint enterprise should be 50 galleys and 5,000 infantry with the necessary stores and munitions for their maintenance. Sebastian was silent about his country's contribution, but he assured Philip that if Spain would contribute what he asked success would be certain.

The situation in North Africa was so serious that many thought intervention by Spain and Portugal might ultimately become inescapable and they would not have been surprised at Philip's acceptance of Sebastian's proposal. Philip, however, had, as we have seen, enough cares on his hands. His troops in the Netherlands, exasperated by his inability to pay them, were on the verge of mutiny; his second bankruptcy was rapidly approaching; the English were preying on his colonies and shipping; a Turkish descent on his Italian dominions was threatening, and the loyalty of Naples and Genoa was suspect. He was therefore in no mood to involve himself in a new war if some way could be found of avoiding it. On the other hand, if Sebastian was determined, as now seemed certain, to invade Africa with or without Spanish

aid, for Philip to stand aside and allow him and his army to be destroyed might ultimately prove disastrous. A Moslem invasion of Spain would inevitably follow.

Moreover, Philip was in general agreement with Sebastian over the desirability of seizing Larache. Although English cloth merchants had recently complained of the poverty of its produce and the inadequacy of its harbour, Philip had once declared that Larache was worth all the rest of Africa put together. This was because he foresaw the evil consequences which would result from its occupation by the Turks. Once they had a base on the Atlantic coast of Morocco they would be able to control the Straits and prey upon his treasure fleets returning from the Indies. In his quandary he decided to play for time. He suggested a personal meeting with Sebastian in order to discuss his project and hinted that some measure of assistance might perhaps be afforded him. This was the message the two ambassadors brought back to Lisbon.

Apart from his many embarrassments, which made Sebastian's proposal doubly unwelcome, Philip regarded his nephew's African project with profound mistrust. Even if it were successful it might only bring about an Ottoman-Moorish alliance which would result in the danger to Italy, as well as to Spain, becoming greater than ever. But a disastrous defeat seemed more probable. Like all Spaniards, Philip was contemptuous of the fighting qualities of the Portuguese and fearful of allying to such inept warriors the finest army in Europe, for thus were Philip's famous *tercios* rated throughout the Continent. At their head was the bloody Alva, the leading soldier of the day. He had offered to accompany the Portuguese expedition provided he was allowed to command it, but Sebastian had made it clear that the leadership would remain in his own hands.

Philip was naturally reluctant to entrust his seasoned troops to so inexperienced a general and one, moreover, who had already shown himself to lack any understanding of the first principles of war. So, already regretting the slight encouragement he had given to his nephew's hope of Spanish aid, he wrote trying to dissuade him from his purpose or at least from imperilling his own

life in Africa. Sebastian ignored his uncle's advice but agreed that they should meet to discuss the project. The conference was fixed for the early weeks of 1577 at the fourteenth-century Jeronomite convent of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Estremadura, midway between Madrid and Lisbon.

Philip arrived at Guadalupe weighed down by cares. To his financial embarrassments and the Turkish menace was added greatly increased anxiety over the situation in the Low Countries. The failure of his northern subjects to compose their religious and political differences and unite against him had long encouraged the hope that eventually he would succeed in imposing his will upon them. But the horrors of the sack of Antwerp by mutinous Spanish soldiery had brought about what long years of oppression and the astute diplomacy of William of Orange had failed to achieve. The Spanish Fury had taught the people that their only hope lay in unity. The Catholic south and the Protestant north, the seventeen provinces represented by the States-General, and Holland and Zeeland led by William of Orange had joined in an alliance and an inviolable peace with the object of driving Spanish soldiery from the land. The laws against heretics had been declared annulled and the Prince had been given full powers as governor and admiral-general. Philip's viceroy, his half-brother Don John, had found himself powerless against the resolute determination of every section of the population. The victor of Lepanto had been forced not only to acquiesce in what had been done but to promise the immediate withdrawal of Spanish troops for all time. If news had not yet reached Philip of the extent of Don John's humiliation he must have known, when he went to Guadalupe, what to expect and have already realised that nearly twenty years of effort to achieve his great ambition of purging his dominions of heresy had ended in failure.

Sebastian arrived at Guadalupe in a very different mood. He felt reassured by his uncle's agreeing to meet him, for he surely would not have condescended to do so had he not been prepared to talk business. Having conceded so much, nothing would have been more natural than for Philip to have summoned his nephew all the way to the Escorial to overawe him with the grim austerity

of the great convent he had built for his home. Instead, he had graciously chosen a meeting place to which Philip had to travel nearly as far as Sebastian. But his uncle's encouragement had gone even further. He had given orders that on Castilian soil his nephew was to receive the same compliments as himself, thus according him a status which no recent king of Portugal would have expected from that quarter.

From the time Sebastian entered Badajoz up to his arrival at Guadalupe, the splendour of his progress equalled, if it did not exceed, that which he enjoyed in his own kingdom. Besides the courtiers who had been sent out to welcome him, his escort included the notables of each district through which he passed. A special compliment was the throwing open of the prisons of Badajoz and the other towns on his route. Each day's march concluded with a jubilant reception at his lodging. When he finally reached Guadalupe the warmth of his reception provoked the apt comment of Cabrera that the people behaved as if they knew he had come to deliver his kingdom into the hands of the Catholic King.

Philip's welcome to his nephew certainly did not fall short of the young man's expectations. There seemed to be no limit to the condescension of his uncle. Not content with driving out to meet him, he descended from his carriage and, to the astonishment of the onlookers, advanced no less than three paces to embrace him. An even greater surprise to the glittering retinues of the two monarchs was Philip's salutation. On their startled ears fell the words "Your Majesty", a compliment which the kings of Castile had not paid to a king of Portugal since they had first laid claim to the Portuguese throne.

It is difficult to discern Philip's purpose in going such lengths to honour the nephew for whom he can have had so little regard or respect. Was he, with an eye on Sebastian's throne, angling for Portuguese esteem? Or was he hoping to win such a measure of his nephew's confidence that the young man would bow to his wishes and abandon his African project? The latter seems the more probable for Philip must already have known that the refusal of Spanish aid would not alone deter Sebastian from his set purpose.

Delighted with his reception and in the highest spirits, Sebastian drove with his uncle up the hill to the monastery set among the olive groves and orchards which clothe the neighbouring sierras to their summits. One of the richest monasteries in Spain, Guadalupe was of impressive size, enclosing behind its crenellated walls a community of three hundred monks, a royal palace, a hostel patronised by the great, and an infirmary for pilgrims. Its schools and workshops employed illuminators, goldsmiths and silversmiths whose skill enhanced its renown.

The monastery owed its fame chiefly to the possession of a small black statue of the Virgin, the gift of Gregory the Great, for which queens embroidered robes and to which great men journeyed far to pay homage. The statue was especially famed for saving the lives of the drowning. Sailors and soldiers were therefore always numerous among its pilgrims. In 1493 Columbus, just returned from discovering America, performed the pilgrimage in fulfilment of a vow made during a great gale at sea. His visit to the shrine is commemorated by the island which he later named after it. On his way to Guadalupe he stayed in the neighbouring town of Trujillo. It is probable that the stirring spectacle of his progress, with an *entourage* which included members of the royal household and six baptised Indians, was beheld by the thirteen-year-old Francisco Pizarro, the son of a swineherd of that town. It is no less likely that a little later, as Columbus passed down the neighbouring valley of the Guadiana, a nine-year-old boy named Hernan Cortés was among the country-folk who thronged the road to see the strange progress of the man whose discovery of a new world had stirred all Europe. Years later Cortés was to make the same pilgrimage, bearing an emerald case made by Indians, and pray for nine consecutive days to Our Lady of Guadalupe in hope of expiating the sins he had committed during his conquest of Mexico. Among the more humble pilgrims were Christians escaped from the Moors who made votive offerings of their slave chains.

At the time of the meeting between Philip and Sebastian, Guadalupe was probably at the height of its glory. Since the beginning of the century gifts of astonishing magnificence had been pouring into the monastery from the New World as well as

from the Old. Among the latter were an altar frontal given by Mary Tudor and another by Henry II of France, both of which survive to this day.

Such was the brilliant setting for a visit of which the two kings, for conflicting reasons, were determined to make a great occasion. Arrived at the palace within the monastery, Philip personally conducted his guest to his rooms and later they dined together in state before the whole Castilian court who had been assembled to do honour to the exceedingly tiresome young man. Sebastian babbled endlessly about the coming African crusade. The longer Philip listened the less he liked it. At his elbow was Alva warning him that the expedition would require at least 15,000 first class troops such as Spaniards, Italians and Germans, over and above what Portugal might send.

Far away in London reports were reaching Elizabeth of the conversations at Guadalupe. According to one informant they were taking the course desired by Sebastian's ministers. It was reported that they had deliberately arranged the meeting in the hope that the irresponsible youth might be dissuaded by Philip from his project. They hoped the King would perhaps be induced to press for the hand of one of the Spanish Infantas, a project they had previously urged upon him but which they feared was as distasteful to him as it plainly was to Philip. Someone else told Elizabeth that Philip had attempted to divert Sebastian from Africa by suggesting a joint attack on England, but this had been brushed aside as less likely to please the Almighty than a crusade against infidels. Sebastian had used that argument in Lisbon where it had brought the retort that heretics at home were a greater menace to the Faith than infidels in Africa, a widely prevalent thesis which had done so much to aid the Ottoman Turks.

Sebastian was obdurate. Philip, finding argument useless but still hoping to secure the command for Alva, confined his further advice to urging Sebastian not to accompany the expedition himself. As his nephew's object was primarily self-glorification this also was to no purpose and only excited resentment. Deeply troubled in his mind about the state of affairs in Africa and convinced that nothing would dissuade Sebastian from his purpose,

Philip weakened. To allow Sebastian to perish unaided might have worse consequences than to borrow again at a usurious rate from the bankers of Augsburg. But, heedless of Alva's advice, he was determined not to commit himself to a larger force than Sebastian had asked for.

So it was agreed between them that Sebastian should raise a force of 10,000 men to which Philip would add 5,000 of his *tercios* and fifty galleys. If the Turks meanwhile attacked Italy and imperilled his kingdom of Naples, Philip would be released from his obligations. Philip's other conditions were that the expedition should be limited to an attack on Larache, that no attempt should be made to penetrate inland and, lastly, that the expedition should take place some time during the current year, 1577. Departure from any one of these conditions would release Philip from his obligations.

A few weeks before the meeting at Guadalupe, Cabrette had arrived in Madrid with Abd el-Malek's appeal. It was little more than a bid for Spanish friendship. After protesting his powerlessness to injure either Spain or Portugal, Abd el-Malek had promised to hang corsairs caught with Spanish prizes, to aid no enemy of Spain—not even the Grand Turk—and to afford special facilities for the ransoming of Christian captives in Moorish hands. No demands were made on Spain.

Philip had seen in this friendly gesture a possible escape from the African commitments which had been forced upon him. He had therefore decided to make no reply until after the meeting at Guadalupe. Later, pondering with an uneasy mind the consequences of the undertaking he had given his nephew, he turned again to the opportunity Abd el-Malek had offered him for an independent solution of the Moorish problem. Cabrette was handed proposals for an alliance. Between Philip and the Shereef there was to be a treaty of peace and non-aggression, binding upon the Moors as long as Philip chose, and Sebastian was to be made a party to it. The Shereef was to give warning of any hostile acts which the Turks might plan against the Peninsula. There was to be free trade between the peoples of the two countries, but the hated Moriscoes, the Moors who had been forced to accept the Christian



faith, were to be excluded from it. Turkish corsairs were to be forbidden the use of Moorish ports to which the ships of Spain and her allies were to have free access. Neither Christian nor Moslem was to be forced to apostatise. Spanish deserters were not to be harboured by the Shereef. There must be no raiding of the Canaries by his subjects. In case of need the contracting parties would aid each other against the Turks. Captives, whether Christian or Moslem, were to be ransomed at sixty ducats (about £19) a head. Such were the main proposals for a treaty intended to forestall Turkish aggression against Spain and to provide an excuse for Philip to withdraw from his undertaking to Sebastian.

Meanwhile Alva's love of fighting had got the better of his good sense. He and his friends had grown so enthusiastic about the coming campaign that they determined to hold Philip to his bargain. They therefore tried to dissuade him from sending the treaty proposals to Abd el-Malck, protesting that he was committed to Sebastian who was already suspicious that *pourparlers* had been opened with the Shereef and that a breach of faith was contemplated. Sebastian in fact already knew what was afoot and was doing his best to prevent the return of Cabrette to Morocco. Whether Philip continued his negotiations is uncertain, but nothing came of them.

The chief care of Alva was that the expedition should, unlike other enterprises undertaken by the vacillating Philip, not be jeopardised by the royal parsimony. His policy was not only to hold the King to his engagements but to persuade him to send a greater force than he had promised. When Philip denied the need for more men and persisted in his expectation that in the end nothing would come of Sebastian's expedition, he argued that should that happen the troops could always be used against England. Alva, with long experience of Philip's half-measures, advised that the stores for the expedition should be drawn from Italy instead of Spain; this would make it less easy for Philip to countermand them and starve his troops of vital supplies.

## *Ways and Means*

**M**EANWHILE NOTHING was happening in Portugal to awaken martial zeal in Philip or to allay Alva's fears of the consequences of his master's irresolution. The immediate problems which Sebastian had to solve were the financing of the coming campaign and the raising of an army. His methods of tackling them did not encourage optimism.

Before an army could be raised means had to be devised for financing it. The revenue of Portugal itself was little over a million ducats, derived mostly from excessive duties on imports. These were already imposing a heavy burden on the people. The overseas possessions, San Thomé and San Jorge da Mina in West Africa, Brazil and the Indies yielded at the most another million ducats, which brought the total revenue up to say £700,000. Had the administration been efficient, or even honest, this would have been more than sufficient for the requirements of the state. But Sebastian was surrounded by ministers chosen by favour rather than merit, in whose improvident hands there was never any margin or reserves with which to meet unforeseen expenses, still less to finance what promised to be a costly war.

Recourse had therefore to be made to forced contributions from the people. The arbitrary exactions of the tax gatherers and their ruthless methods excited bitter resentment against the King's advisers, although to the King himself the people remained staunch. The Church was mulcted of a third of its reserves. The Moriscoes were allowed to purchase for 225,000 ducats freedom from confiscation of goods as a punishment for sinning against the Inquisition, a right which they had been granted long before but had never been allowed to enjoy.

In Spain and Portugal, as indeed in most of Europe at that time,

taxes were customarily imposed only on those who could least afford to pay, for only the poor were powerless to resist. When the nobility and gentlemen of Portugal were called upon to contribute their quota there was a violent outburst against so flagrant an attack upon their ancient prerogatives. One outraged noble, Francisco de Melo, wrote to the King protesting against the unjust demands which had been made on him and which, he hinted, ill-became so virtuous a monarch. Was it not unreasonable, he asked, that the aristocracy should be subject to taxes from which lesser men were exempt? He boldly attacked the King's favourites and reminded him that the last occasion upon which the nation had been called upon to finance a war was the disastrous attack on Tangier in 1437. Why, he demanded, should they now be asked to contribute to a war which offered even less chance of success? In any case, wars should be financed by the common people and not by gentlemen.

In spite of his natural annoyance at this attack, the King found the argument irresistible. Thus the doughty noble and many of his fellows were excused and the money found by other means, "chiefly", according to a foreign observer, "by the blood of the poor".

There was, however, close at hand, a palliative which has long been the solace and final resort of bankrupt states and which to-day we call inflation. The royals of Castile, which had long since been withdrawn from circulation, again became current but at a ninth above their par value, "which", it was recorded, "many noted as ominous".

The raising of an army, with or without finance, was not easy for a country such as Portugal which had no armed forces to call upon at home. Sebastian's first step was to appoint four colonels, a rank of recent introduction into European armies. They were Miguel de Noronha, Diego Lopez de Sequeira, Francisco de Tavora and Vasco de Silveira, not one of whom had ever seen active service or, possibly, had any experience of the profession of arms. The first duty entrusted to them was to tour the kingdom and recruit an army of twelve thousand foot. They failed to raise anything like this number and the men they did secure were all

drawn from the dregs of the population, physical wrecks driven by destitution to seize this fleeting chance of a possibly less miserable lot. Later, when Portugal stood aghast at the disastrous consequences of recruiting such useless soldiers, it was alleged that the gallant colonels had enrolled only those too poor to bribe them.

The foreign communities of Lisbon found the spectacle of Sebastian exercising his troops and himself in the art of war very diverting. The Spanish ambassador said there was only one instructor and he so ignorant that the men were more incompetent at the end of their training than at the beginning. The King was reported to be preparing himself for the rigours of war by seeking encounters with furious beasts and by hazarding his life in storms at sea and on the more tranquil waters of the Tagus. Such were the stories with which neighbouring countries were regaled.

The home forces, however, were only to form a nucleus to the army which, in accordance with current custom, was to be composed chiefly of foreign mercenaries. For generations past anyone in western Europe wanting to raise and equip an army had turned first to the Netherlands, the traditional recruiting ground of the Continent and the cheapest market for the purchase of munitions of war. Either just before or immediately after his return from Guadalupe, early in 1577, Sebastian had sent Nuno Alvares Pereira to recruit four thousand men in Flanders or, in case of need, in Germany. He was also ordered to purchase substantial quantities of military stores. He was accompanied by a member of Sebastian's household who carried a personal letter to the Prince of Orange and whose special responsibility it was to see to the embarkation of the troops.

The political situation in the Low Countries at the time of the Portuguese envoy's arrival made the engagement of an army a comparatively easy task. Don John's surrender to the united clamour of the Netherlands and his meek withdrawal of Spanish troops, had set free large numbers of mercenaries for whom the protracted struggle between William of Orange and Philip had long provided regular and profitable employment. The Prince's

triumph having deprived them of their livelihood, they were living parasitically on the civilian population. Through long and bitter experience the Netherlanders were better able than most people to protect themselves against the rapacity of armed and destitute soldiery. To the privations imposed by the mean and heartless inhabitants were now added the rigours of winter. The pinched and starving mercenaries rallied eagerly to Nuno Alvares' call. But he was no less warmly welcomed by the heads of private armies which had suddenly become a costly embarrassment to their princely employers. Chief among these was Duke Adolf of Holstein who had grown anxious at his inability to employ or pay some thousands of German *lands-knechts*. He offered to accompany Sebastian's expedition and to take with him a force of twelve thousand men. The Duke, a good business man who had no illusions about Sebastian, imposed certain conditions. His men, mostly Calvinists, were to be accompanied by their own priests and there was to be no interference with their freedom of worship; they were to receive an advance of six months' pay before embarking and three German towns must be found to guarantee the contract. Nuno Alvares, knowing that if Sebastian had had any hope of being able to pay more than four thousand men he would have asked for them, contented himself with picking that number from among the best of the German veterans. At the same time he submitted the Duke's terms to his master in Lisbon, a little dubious about the proposed advance of pay.

The list of military stores which Nuno Alvares had been ordered to obtain from the Netherlands was impressive.<sup>1</sup> It included:

25,000 quintals of gunpowder  
12 cannon

<sup>1</sup> We know something of the cost of arms and equipment on the Continent at this time as the result of an enquiry sent by Leicester to William Davison, the well-known English agent in the Netherlands. Writing from Antwerp on the 8th January 1578 Davison gave Leicester the following prices:

"White Milan corselets, graven, with all their furniture £3. 6. 8.  
apiece, the caliver with his flask, touch-box, and graven morion

2,000 cannon balls  
 3,000 muskets  
 4,000 arquebuses  
 12,000 quick matches  
 6,000 barrels of flour  
 3,000 quintals of cheese  
 4,500 quintals of salt meat

This substantial order caused a stir in the armaments market. A report reached the English court that "a messenger from the King of Portugal is buying secretly all the armour he can get in Antwerp."<sup>1</sup>

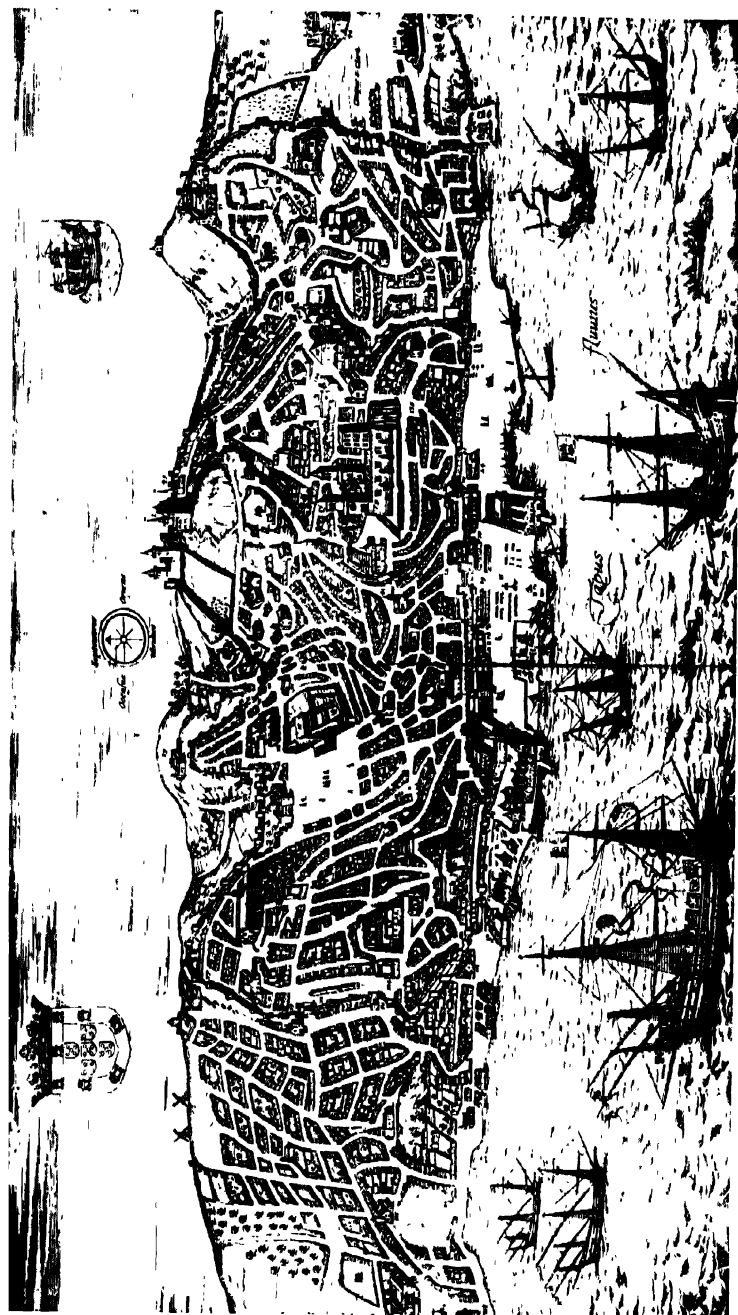
The purchases were to be financed by borrowing from the Jews against an undertaking to repay in three years' time with 92,000 quintals of pepper. There appears, rather surprisingly, to have been no great difficulty in coming to this arrangement or in obtaining the stores. The negotiations nevertheless took a considerable time and there was to be a further long delay before Nuno Alvares with his troops and stores eventually reached Lisbon. As he expected, Sebastian refused the Duke of Holstein's terms so he had to make fresh arrangements for obtaining the four thousand mercenaries he required.

One of the conditions of the Guadalupe agreement had been that Sebastian should launch his expedition before the end of the year. From the protracted nature of Nuno Alvares' negotiations it was evident that it would be very difficult for Sebastian to collect the 10,000 men he had to find under the agreement in

23s. 4d. apiece. Muskets of various bores, 6, 8 and 10 bullets to the pound, with flask, touch-box, brazen charges, rest, and breastplate £3. apiece." Targets, burganets and caskets cost 16s. each, "White Milan morions of Spanish fashion" 10s. and common halberds 5s. He adds that not more than 50 muskets were obtainable in Antwerp, "but they must be got from Wesel or other towns in Dutchland". *Calendar of State Papers, Foreign* 1577-78, p. 463.

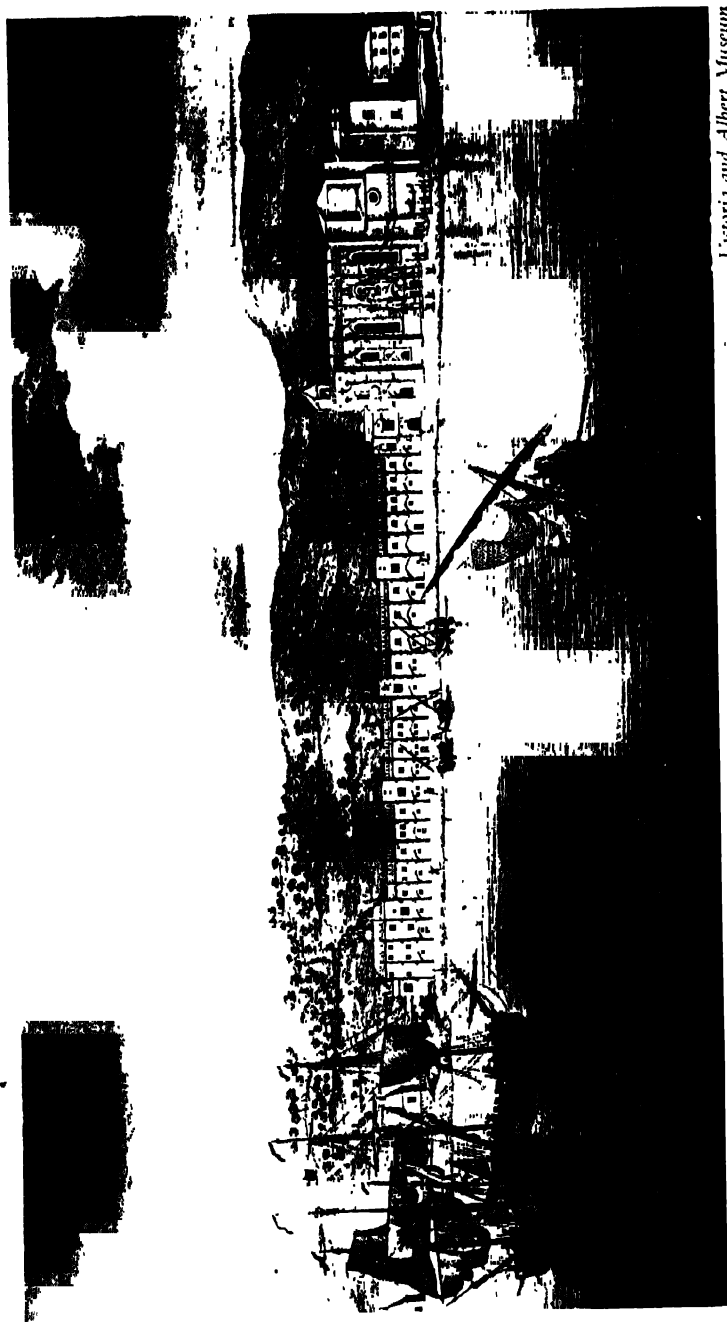
From Hoddesdon, the English agent in Hamburg, we know that the cost of gunpowder was something less than 10d. a pound. *Ibid.* p. 495.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 32



British Museum

LISBON IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY



*Victoria and Albert Museum*

BELEM: THE CONVENT OF THE JERONIMOS AND THE CHURCH OF SANTA MARIA



time, especially as late in the year the weather would be unfavourable to a successful landing. Had it not been for Alva's influence Philip would probably have made this an excuse to withdraw altogether. But he was still a prey to misgivings regarding the possible consequences of withholding support from Sebastian. Alva, concerned at the slow progress of preparations in Spain as well as in Portugal, took advantage of his master's apprehensions to advise the postponement of the expedition until the following year, 1578. Philip finally consented and the proposal was naturally welcomed by Sebastian.

Disappointed at the failure of troops to arrive from the Low Countries and worried by repeated appeals from Mohammed to speed his departure, Sebastian decided to try to raise an army elsewhere. Believing he could hire mercenaries in Tuscany, he sent an envoy to Florence to seek the aid of the Grand Duke Ferdinand I. The negotiations began well but concluded badly. The Grand Duke readily granted the request for permission to recruit in his domains and went so far as to agree to help finance the expedition with a loan of 200,000 ducats, nearly a quarter of Portugal's total domestic revenue. Sebastian suggested that the loan should be secured on shipments of pepper which had not yet reached Lisbon. But the Grand Duke was not a Florentine for nothing. Reports had reached him, probably through his bankers and their correspondents in Antwerp, that Sebastian's pepper was being rather heavily over-mortgaged. He therefore refused to allow either troops or ducats to leave his country before the pepper was safely delivered to him in Leghorn. When the cargoes eventually reached Lisbon the ship-masters, as cautious as the Grand Duke, refused to carry the pepper on to Leghorn unless freight was paid in advance. But so acute was the shortage of ready cash in the Portuguese capital that the demand could not be met and the pepper, instead of going to Leghorn, was used to meet the more pressing needs of rapacious courtiers and clamant creditors nearer home. Thus Sebastian got neither troops nor ducats from Tuscany.

The news of Portugal's military preparations awakened hopes of profitable service in bellicose Castilian breasts. The offers of

such noted warriors to join his expedition were as flattering to Sebastian as they were unexpected, for in the sixteenth century the Spanish *tercios* were as famous fighters as the German *landsknechts* had been at the end of the fifteenth. Hoping to add to the number of these volunteers, and without a word to his uncle, he sent recruiters into Castile to enrol men secretly, "without beat of drum", as the saying went. The only effect was to cause wholly unnecessary offence to Philip.

Sebastian's enthusiasm was in no way affected by rebuffs and disappointments. These did not come only from abroad. At home ill-concealed disapproval of the whole project was general. His great-uncle, Cardinal Henry, made no attempt to disguise the bitterness of his feelings. The intensity of Henry's opposition and the weakness of the King's resources were so well known that people began to hope that the expedition would never sail.

On 9 November the people of Europe and North Africa were startled by the appearance of a comet of exceptional brilliance with a long bright tail.<sup>1</sup> In Lisbon, where everyone's nerves were on edge, its appearance excited much speculation. The ever optimistic Sebastian recognised in it a sign of divine blessing on his expedition and he spared no effort to persuade his troops that it was an omen of victory. There was, however, no lack of those who interpreted it in the opposite sense.

Any annoyance or embarrassment which opposition at home may have caused Sebastian was quickly dispelled at the close of the year by the arrival in Lisbon of Antonio da Cunha with Mulai Mohammed's appeal for aid. This provided him with a convenient retort to those who had repeatedly declared that there was no justification for the expedition. As we have seen, the King would not listen to Antonio da Cunha's warning that Mulai Mohammed was wholly unworthy of support, an opinion which, if it was not

<sup>1</sup> The comet, to which no name has been given, was visible until January 1578. "This comet", writes the Astronomer Royal, "is of historical interest, as numerous observations of it were made by the great Danish astronomer Tycho Brahe, who was able to prove that the comet was much more distant than the moon. This was a great blow to the old Aristotelean ideas of the universe". *Letter to the author.*

silenced, must have added considerably to the general apprehension.

At about this time, perhaps as the result of the arrival of Mohammed's envoy, Philip sensibly called for a military intelligence report on Morocco with special reference to the prospects for a successful attack on Larache. This task was entrusted to an experienced Spanish soldier, Francisco de Aldana, the Alcade of San Sebastian, who was sent in disguise to Morocco to obtain the information Philip required. No copy of his report has survived, but we know he found the Moorish fortresses more formidable than had been expected. Philip immediately sent Aldana on to Sebastian hoping that his discouraging account of the prospects of success might deter his nephew where all else had failed. Aldana was of course unsuccessful, but Sebastian had the grace to thank him for his helpful information and rewarded him suitably. Aldana appears, indeed, to have impressed the King very favourably with his personality and military knowledge, for before he left Lisbon he was asked to promise to return later if his services were required.

Philip still clung to the hope that in the end some way of avoiding war in Africa would be found. This was more than ever desirable owing to a fresh outbreak of hostilities in the Netherlands. Towards the end of 1577 he had displayed unwonted energy by sending Alexander Farnese, Duke of Parma, at the head of an army of 20,000 Spanish and Italian veterans to the Low Countries to re-establish his authority over his rebellious subjects. In January, within a few days of his arrival, Parma, who came to be recognised as the ablest commander of the century, had joined forces with Don John and by his personal leadership had inflicted a severe defeat on the forces of the States-General at the battle of Gemblours. Serious though the reverse was, the Netherlands were busily preparing to retaliate. It was evident that the struggle between them and Philip, which had dragged on for the greater part of his reign, was again to be resumed at untold cost in men and money. To add to his worries, there were reports of trouble brewing in the Basque provinces and the likelihood of troops having to be used there. Philip therefore informed Sebastian that

he was unable to divide his forces and incur fresh responsibilities. His withdrawal did not have the effect which he had hoped for but can hardly have expected. Sebastian declared his intention of proceeding without Spanish aid.

Philip was deeply concerned. All his life he had dreaded Ottoman military power and he had little doubt that the Shereef, of whose ability there had been much talk, was a master of the Turkish military tactics which had brought disaster to so many Christian armies. Alva had repeatedly told him that the risks were such that the Moors should not be challenged without a far greater force than Spain could afford in existing circumstances. But Sebastian, with far fewer resources at his command, proposed challenging them without any regard for the probable consequences. Disaster seemed certain and in its train would come an intensification of the invasion peril of which the Peninsula had lived in dread for centuries past. A victory for the Shereef would mean an assault on Spain by triumphant and revengeful Moors, possibly even by a combined Ottoman and Moorish host. None knew better than Philip how incapable his country would be of withstanding a determined invasion from Africa.

Philip decided to renew his efforts to dissuade Sebastian from pursuing the reckless project he had undertaken. First he sent Juan de Silva to warn him once more of the dangers and difficulties which lay ahead. "Nothing", wrote the despairing ambassador, "will move this young man." Then Alva, on Philip's instructions, wrote a memorandum demonstrating the impracticability of Sebastian's project on military grounds. Hoping that the opinion of so eminent an authority would have some effect, Philip sent Luiz da Silva to present Alva's memorandum to Sebastian. But this mission was also a failure. Finally, in March, Philip sent the Duke of Medina Sidonia, known to history as the admiral of the Armada of 1588, to see what he could do with his obstinate nephew. He, too, failed.

Some said that Philip was not sincere in his efforts to restrain Sebastian, for whatever happened he would be the gainer. If Larache fell to Sebastian Spain, being more exposed to attack from Africa than Portugal, would derive the greater benefit. If

Sebastian failed there was every likelihood of his crown passing to Philip. Those who better knew the Spanish king's mind attributed Philip's action to his fear of prejudicing the truce which then existed between himself and the Turks. But Philip should have known that the maintenance of this peace was as important to the Turks as it was to the Spaniards. At this time neither could afford to divide their forces, the former for fear of the Persians and the latter for fear of the Flemings.

Sebastian, in his usual nonchalant and light-hearted way, prepared to carry through his plans without Spanish help. He had one boon to set off against the loss of Philip's aid. Gregory XIII had recently given the expedition his blessing. More important than the papal blessing was the grant, which had gone with it, of the coveted bull of the Holy Crusade. The Santa Crusada had formerly been granted by the popes to the faithful of Spain and Portugal in recognition of their struggle against the Moors of the Peninsula. It was renewable every five years and conferred certain privileges and indulgences such as the right to eat eggs and milk during Lent and meat on certain fasts. The kings of Spain and Portugal had secured from the compliant Vatican the right not only to sell these privileges but to compel their subjects, both at home and in the colonies, to purchase them whether they wished to or not. The Crusada had consequently become a very important source of revenue. When, therefore, on the expulsion of the Moors from the Peninsula the Vatican threatened to withdraw the bull there was dismay in both countries. Spain and Portugal, however, successfully pleaded that as they were still fighting infidels in Africa the Crusada should not be withdrawn. Its continued retention had been one of the reasons for John III retaining the port of Mazagan and for Spain retaining her *presidios* when, on all other grounds, they did not seem worth keeping. But subsequently the Crusada had lapsed. Its recovery by Portugal, at a moment when Sebastian so desperately needed new sources of revenue and when a papal blessing on his expedition could give it a status which Catholic countries might hesitate to ignore, was an important gain in the face of which the King felt he could more than ever afford to ignore his uncle's graceless behaviour.

Meanwhile, over in Africa, the Shereef had been keeping himself well informed about what was going on in Lisbon. Sebastian's intentions caused him considerable concern. Rather than remain dependent on the market gossip of his ports, which were still trading with Spain and Portugal and buzzing with rumours, he had taken the wise precaution of placing his own spies in Lisbon. With trade still active between the two countries and with a large number of Europeans in his service from whom to choose suitable agents, this had presented few difficulties. These spies were in regular communication with him, but as they had neither the knowledge nor the experience necessary for a reliable appraisal of the forces which Sebastian was slowly assembling they mistook the panoply of war for armed strength. Their reports tended to exaggerate both the imminence and the weight of the attack which Sebastian was preparing. Abd el-Malek had therefore long been on tenterhooks, wondering where and when the blow would fall.

At the end of December the Shereef's feelings of apprehension and uncertainty had been greatly aggravated by the alarming news that a Christian fleet had anchored at Mogador, a port dangerously close to Marrakech. There could be little doubt that they were the Portuguese, but it was puzzling and a little disturbing to hear that they had already established friendly relations with the people of the port. There had even been an exchange of hostages and a banquet aboard ship with gifts for the Moorish notables. The strangers, moreover, said they wanted to trade.

The Shereef, cursing the gullibility of his people and suspecting their loyalty, sent orders for one of the Christians to be seized and brought to him for examination. Camels laden with the sugar, figs and dates which the Christians had asked for were driven down to the shore. The ships' boats approached but the strangers were hesitant. Then a seaman, more confident than the rest, leapt ashore. Moors who had been in hiding, waiting for such an opportunity, seized him and, pressing a dagger to his chest, carried him off to the Shereef.

The account the prisoner gave of himself was as unexpected as it was reassuring. He could speak to the Moors in their own

tongue, though rather haltingly, having several times previously visited their coasts on trading voyages. His name was John Fry and his captain or general, as he called him, was Francis Drake.

The Shereef's immediate care was to make reparation for this hostile act to the friendly power on whom he depended for his munitions and whom he could ill-afford to offend. John Fry was sent back to Mogador with a suitable present for his commander and the assurance of a cordial welcome should he wish to prolong his stay. But Drake had already sailed and John Fry, instead of circumnavigating the globe with the greatest seaman of the day, went prosaically home in the next English merchant ship to put into a Moorish port.

## CHAPTER 9

### *Lisbon*

THE VERY SMALL PARTY of followers who remained faithful to Mulai Mohammed during his flight from the victorious Abd el-Malek included no one of consequence. He still had, however, one powerful adherent who was endeavouring to hold out independently against the new régime. This man was Sidi Abd el-Kerim, kaid of a great part of the kingdom of Fez, including Arzila, Larache and El-Ksar el-Kebir. Having boldly rejected all Abd el-Malek's attempts to win his allegiance he had soon found himself in great peril in face of the latter's growing power and of the defection of most of Mohammed's men. In July 1577 he endeavoured to secure Portuguese protection by offering Sebastian the port of Larache. Before he received an answer to this offer—for all we know his letter never reached Sebastian—his situation became so desperate that he fled to Arzila and shut himself up behind its walls. Realising that unaided he had no hope of holding out indefinitely against Abd el-Malek, he appealed to the governor of Tangier, Duarte de Meneses, to come to his aid, promising to cede Arzila to Portugal. The governor at once put to sea with five ships, occupied Arzila in Sebastian's name and sent a brother of Sidi Abd el-Kerim to Lisbon to report the unexpected recovery of a port which John III had abandoned twenty-four years before. The nearness of this old *fronteira* to the fortress of Tangier and to the coveted port of Larache made its recovery at this juncture very timely and exceedingly welcome to Sebastian. It also greatly encouraged his expectation that the Moors would welcome him into Africa.

Meanwhile Mohammed himself had begun to tire of Portuguese hospitality and close confinement within the narrow walls of Ceuta. Life on that rocky wind-swept promontory was



naturally distasteful to a Moor, whether of the town or the open country, for it lacked the amenities of both and could only offer a way of life which was even more distasteful to a Moslem than it was to Christian soldiers so many of whom found it unendurable. Bewildered by his strange surroundings and apprehensive at the growing strength of Abd el-Malek's hold on the country, he found the interminable delay in the arrival of Sebastian's expedition both irksome and disturbing. Assurances from Lisbon of the grand scale on which aid was being prepared and of the great force of mercenaries which was daily expected from Flanders served only to increase his apprehensions for they seemed to indicate conquest and annexation rather than the restoration of a dispossessed ruler. It is also probable that within the narrow compass of the fortress it had been impossible to conceal the real intentions of the King. Mohammed therefore decided to try both to hasten the arrival of the expedition and to limit its size to his personal needs. So he again sent envoys to Lisbon.

Sebastian was probably as gratified by the anxiety of the envoys that he should speed the departure of his expedition as by the glowing account of the state of Mohammed's fortunes with which they deceived him. They declared that their master was awaiting his expedition with a large number of men under arms and that most of the Moorish towns and fortresses, besides many of the enemy's troops, were ready to rebel against the Shereef and join forces with the invaders. The recent cession of Arzila lent colour to these pretensions.

A no less important part of the envoy's mission was to persuade Sebastian not to lead his expedition in person and to limit it to 4,000 men under an experienced commander. They argued that his presence in Africa would be harmful to the common cause because the Moors would think he had come to subject them to infidel rule instead of to restore their rightful ruler.

The attempt to divert the King from his purpose only strengthened his secret determination to hold all that he might conquer. He had already equipped himself with a crown and other regalia for the day when he should become king of the Moors.

Sebastian, too, had grown impatient. It was April when

Mohammed's envoys arrived. More than a year had passed since Nuno Alvares had been sent to the Low Countries to engage mercenaries and purchase munitions and stores. Even if there was no more delay in his return it would not be possible for the expedition to sail before summer had come and Africa grown intolerably hot. To postpone the expedition till autumn was impracticable on account of the storms which at that season begin to beat down upon the Atlantic seaboard to the peril of coast-wise shipping. But nothing could be done before the arrival of Alvares and the mercenaries who were to be the backbone of the expedition.

Sebastian's refusal of the Duke of Holstein's offer of troops, besides causing the loss of much valuable time, had imposed on Nuno Alvares the task of recruiting mercenaries in much less favourable circumstances than when he had first arrived in the Low Countries. In July Don John, repudiating his undertakings, had seized Namur with a body of Walloon soldiery and once more thrown the country into turmoil. His rashness had cost him the support of his Catholic adherents and placed William of Orange in a stronger position than ever. The country, however, was too disturbed for the recruitment of mercenaries for foreign employment to be easy. It was made still more difficult for Alvares by rumours that Sebastian's expedition was merely a cloak to conceal something more sinister. Some shared Elizabeth's suspicion that the mercenaries were required for an attack on England, the friend of the Netherlands. Others believed they were destined to join Philip's army and in due course would be used against their own country.

William of Orange knew these to be idle rumours but had no wish for troops of which he could make good use himself to leave the country. He happened, however, to have on his hands three thousand ill-disciplined mercenaries whom he had found incurably predatory and of whom he would be only too pleased to be rid. They had, he said, served Philip's interests better than his own. He therefore allowed Alvares to engage these troublesome freebooters. Sebastian had stipulated that the men should be German *landskenects* such as Isabella had used against the Spanish Moors, so

Germans were they called. "These Germans," commented one chronicler, "are Holsteiners, Hollanders and Walloons. The last thing they are is German." Determined that they should give him no more trouble, the Prince had them disarmed and their weapons placed under a guard until they sailed.

Although Alvares had orders to enroll four thousand men he decided to content himself with the three thousand he had got and to embark them as quickly as possible before they had time to desert. But the people, swayed by insistent reports from Elizabeth, were convinced that the troops were really destined for Spain for use against England. Feelings at this time were running very high. The disaster at Gemblours, where the Netherlanders had lost over 6,000 men killed without inflicting any loss on the Spaniards, had deeply incensed the people. Elizabeth, too, had recently been less niggardly in her support of the rebels which had raised hopes of still further aid from across the Channel. The people were therefore in no mood to countenance avoidable aid to Philip or harm to England. In February, just as Alvares was about to embark at Antwerp with his troops, together with the munitions and stores he had purchased, he was seized and thrown into prison.

Sebastian protested to the States-General that his expedition was destined for Africa and that no attack on England was contemplated, and he entreated their good offices in persuading Elizabeth that her apprehensions were wholly unwarranted.<sup>1</sup> William of Orange intervened and secured the release of Alvares who was at last permitted to embark. He had taken some fifteen months to complete his mission. Davison, the English agent, watched his departure with misgiving. "The Almaynes" (Germans), he wrote, "intended for the King of Portugal's alleged service in Africa are departed thitherward. If they keep that course, they deceive the opinion of divers here of good judgment."<sup>2</sup>

Early in the year William had written to Sebastian regretting that the many claims on his slender resources had prevented him from rendering Portugal more generous aid. He was doubtless

<sup>1</sup> *Calendar of State Papers, Foreign* 1577-78, p. 540.

<sup>2</sup> *Calendar of State Papers, Foreign* 1577-78, p. 654.

excusing himself for not being able to spare any of the German *landsknechts* Sebastian so particularly wanted. William tried to turn this to account after Nuno Alvares' release. He offered Sebastian two regiments of Germans if he would induce Philip to make peace with the Low Countries. Sebastian's acceptance of this offer infuriated Philip who refused to tolerate any association between his nephew and the Prince of Orange in matters touching Spanish interests. Don John had told him "that which the Prince loathes most in the world is your Majesty; if he could, he would drink your Majesty's blood!"

On 15 May the Flemish ships which, owing to Elizabeth's navy being astride the sea route to Spain, Alvares had had to charter, dropped anchor in the Tagus. The three thousand freebooting mercenaries went into camp at Cascaes, about sixteen miles from Lisbon and at the mouth of the river. Their arrival, which had been so long awaited, caused much excitement in the capital. Real soldiers and vital munitions had at last arrived to give strength to an expedition which till then had looked like being a contemptible affair. Sebastian inspected them but in his enthusiasm he showed little concern that the mercenaries were a thousand under strength and were not German *landsknechts* at all. There is also reason to believe that they arrived without arquebuses or muskets. These may have been forgotten in the hurry of departure or William of Orange may, after all, have decided to retain their weapons in order to prevent precious firearms leaving his country.

Philip's ambassador in Lisbon, Juan de Silva, whose dispatches were not always reliable, reported the Germans to be well-disciplined troops of model behaviour, but he had regretfully to record that the distinguished officer who commanded them was a Spanish subject. This man was Martin of Burgundy, Seigneur of Tamberg, a son of Philip of Burgundy and Jeanne de Hesdin. "They have told me so much good of the colonel of the Germans", he wrote, "that I am profoundly hurt that he should have been guilty of defection at the eleventh hour."

Elizabeth's conviction that Sebastian was preparing an attack on England, and her success in persuading the States-General that this was so, had, as we have seen, already caused much delay

which was to have far-reaching consequences for Portugal. Although the Queen's suspicions were groundless, circumstances tended to support her worst fears. Pope Gregory XIII had recently confirmed his predecessor's bull excommunicating Elizabeth for whose overthrow, as an essential preliminary to the rescue of England from heresy, he had been scheming since his accession. He had also been urging the need for an assault on England, either from Spanish Flanders or Ireland.

The Queen was seriously alarmed by a report which reached Walsingham from Paris in February. Twenty-six galleys at Naples and four at Civita Vecchia had embarked a force of 2,000 Italian troops, found by the Pope and fully equipped with corselets, arquebuses, pikes and halberds. They were destined, the report went on, for Ireland where they were to aid the turbulent Shane O'Neill in raising rebellion. At their head was a notorious English traitor, Sir Thomas Stukeley, and they were accompanied by Irish priests, one of whom was a bishop. The report seemed only too likely to be true for the French king, with whom Elizabeth's relations were now considerably strained, was harbouring another Irish rebel, James Fitzmaurice, Earl of Desmond. Paris was therefore likely to be well-informed about Irish affairs. But some of those who knew of Sebastian's recent efforts to secure Italian mercenaries suspected that these papal troops were to be employed by Portugal. It was therefore excusable for the Queen to credit Sebastian with implication in the Irish plot.

The Queen had Giraldi, the Portuguese ambassador in London, questioned by Leicester. Disbelieving the ambassador's assurances that Sebastian's objective was Africa and not Ireland, she had his next despatch intercepted. But it was in a cypher to which none could find the key. So anxious was the Queen to discover the truth of the matter and so confident that Giraldi's despatch would enable her to do so that she had it sent to Davison with instructions to get it decyphered by Philip de Marnix, Count of Sainte Aldegonde, a staunch supporter of William of Orange and a scholar of European reputation. When the letter arrived back in England *en clair* it was of course found to contain nothing

incriminating. Elizabeth nevertheless remained profoundly suspicious of Sebastian and credited both Philip of Spain and Henry of France with being associated with him in the plot against Ireland. "This idea", wrote Mendoza, the Spanish ambassador, "has alarmed her so that she has made great preparations all over the country, both to raise men and to reinforce the guards in the ports as well as ordering the equipment of a large number of ships."<sup>1</sup>

The rebel Stukeley, who commanded the papal expedition, was reputedly a bastard son of Henry VIII, a circumstance to which he owed a life already many times forfeited. Camden described him as "a ruffian, a spendthrift, and a notable vapourer". At an early age he had had to seek refuge on the Continent where he entered the service of the French king. Henry II sent him as a spy to England where he tried to recover favour by betraying his master's plans for the capture of Calais. After a spell in the Tower of London he had again to flee across the Channel where he entered the service of the Emperor who sent him back to England on a special mission. Here he was arrested on a charge of coining, but for a second time he secured a royal pardon. Privateering next attracted him, and his operations were so successful and provoked such remonstrances from Spain, France and Portugal that Elizabeth had him apprehended. On again recovering his freedom he found employment in Ireland under O'Neill, which quickly got him into fresh trouble. He was arrested on a charge of treasonably plotting an invasion of Ireland with the Spanish ambassador. Again he escaped conviction. He next fled to Spain where the cordiality of his reception by Philip II, who had previously harboured Irish traitors, astonished even the English ambassador. He devoted himself to furthering his invasion plans, but he could win no support from Philip whose reluctance ever to commit himself to anything was not weakened by his protégé's record of crime and treachery. Stukeley turned in disgust once again to soldiering and, having fought at Boulogne, Metz and St Quentin, he had no difficulty in entering the service of Don John under whom he fought at Lepanto.

<sup>1</sup> *Calendar of State Papers, Foreign* 1577-78, pp. 474, 552, 597; *Calendar of State Papers, Spanish* 1568-79, p. 561.

Later he was in Paris plotting a joint Spanish and French invasion of Ireland. His negotiations again failing, he went to Rome. Here, in 1577, he successfully won papal support for his invasion plans to the extent of a single ship, six hundred *condottieri* (not the 2,000 reported to Elizabeth), 100,000 ducats and a monthly allowance of 1,000 ducats. The Pope also gave him the title of Marquis of Leinster, but he became generally known as Marquis of Ireland. The troops, it was credibly reported, were surreptitiously equipped by Philip, under papal pressure and as a reprisal on Elizabeth for aiding the Prince of Orange.

On hearing the news of Stukeley's embarkation Elizabeth sent Martin Frobisher, who was about "to leave on his expedition to the mines of Cathay," to cruise off the west coast of Ireland to intercept him. But the traitor was never to see Ireland or trouble England again. His ship, the *St John of Genoa*, was so rotten that he had to put in to Lisbon to beg a fresh one.<sup>1</sup>

Directly Stukeley arrived Sebastian determined to secure for his African expedition the services of the well-equipped papal troops. As the ship was in so bad a state that the *condottieri* refused to continue their voyage to Ireland, he met with less opposition from them than might otherwise have been the case. Stukeley, on the other hand, was reluctant to abandon an enterprise he had so long been planning. But eventually he yielded, declaring that, after all, from Ireland "there is nothing to be gotten but hunger and lice." Sebastian had, however, also to reckon with the Church. The local papal representatives offered determined opposition. To the vigorous protest of the Collector Apostolic the King characteristically retorted, according to the official dispatch to Rome, that "he understood the business better than the Pope, or any of us, or anyone else in the world, and in fine it was best not to go (to Ireland) at present". After he had used the troops in Africa he would "afford all aid and favour for the accomplishment of all that the Pope desires."<sup>2</sup> But Gregory, like everyone else who fell foul of the King, had to give way and content himself with ineffectual demands that he should be

<sup>1</sup> British Museum—MSS. *Domestic Addenda*, April 1578.

<sup>2</sup> *Calendar of State Papers, Rome 1572-1578*, p. 436.

“reimbursed all the expenditure that he has incurred in transporting to Lisbon the said 600 foot, and that the artillery, pikes, arquebuses and other munitions sent aboard the ships are restored and kept safe at Lisbon ... until the return from Africa.”<sup>1</sup>

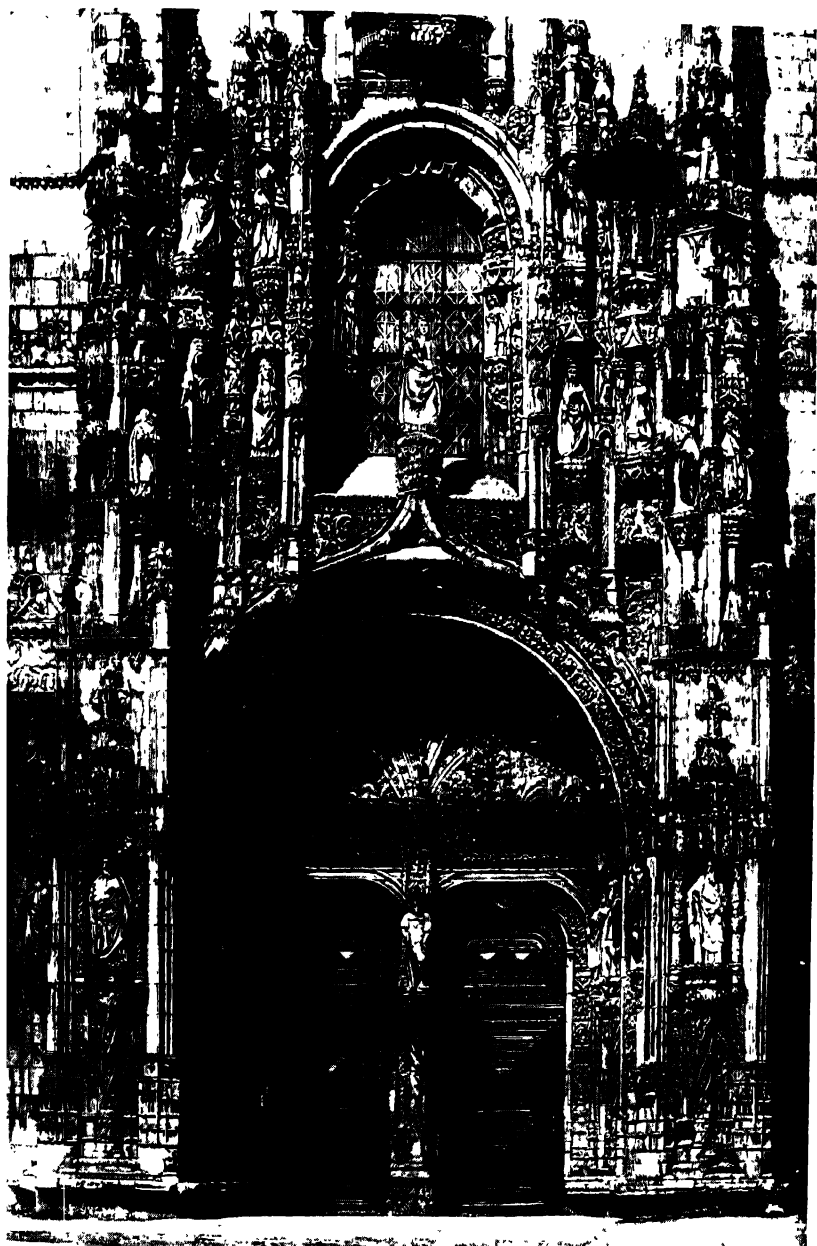
The news that Stukeley had abandoned his Irish enterprise aroused Elizabeth’s further suspicions. Sir Amyas Paulet reported from Paris a rumour that Stukeley had been shipwrecked on the coast of Brittany, but, he added, “the news is too good to be true”. The Queen thought so too. Paulet had already sent a spy to Lisbon to watch Stukeley but a second was now sent from England “with a ship freighted with corn ... like a merchant” to report on his activities. Later there arrived in Lisbon a party of Englishmen who offered their services to Sebastian in his African expedition. Doubtless they were mostly adventurers or soldiers of fortune seeking profitable service after the manner of those days, but two at least of their number were spies sent by the Queen to keep an eye on Stukeley and report what new treachery he was plotting.

Stukeley was kept hidden away in the Spanish ambassador’s house in Lisbon, but his troops appear to have camped in the neighbourhood of Cascaes, for no sooner had they arrived than trouble broke out between them and the so-called Germans. The behaviour of the latter had already dispelled any illusions there may have been regarding William’s reasons for parting with them. Directly after their arrival they had begun harrying the unfortunate local inhabitants who lived in constant terror of what evil the Germans would do next. The arrival of papal troops in the neighbourhood further inflamed the mercenaries by exciting their religious prejudices. Although only the riff-raff of William’s army, more interested in plunder than ideologies and neither good Calvinists nor good Catholics, they regarded the Pope as the chief abettor in Philip’s political oppression and religious persecution of the Netherlands. They therefore lost no time in making trouble for the Italians, thus causing profound discord between two important elements of Sebastian’s little army.

But the papal troops seem to have behaved very nearly as badly as the Netherlanders. Their captains refused to obey Stukeley on

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 447.





*Victoria and Albert Museum*

BELEM: THE MAIN DOOR OF THE CHURCH OF SANTA MARIA

TANGIER



the ground that he was an Englishman and when Sebastian intervened they marched right into the royal antechamber accompanied by more than twenty arquebusiers with matches burning.<sup>1</sup>

Sebastian's expedition had now begun to take shape. Besides his three thousand Germans and six hundred Italians he had managed to raise a force of about 10,000 Portuguese. They were as poor fighting material as was ever put into the field but no worse than was to be expected from the methods employed to raise them. We have already seen how recruitment from the masses was carried out. The support of the nobility and gentry was secured by announcing that any noble or *fidalgo* who refused to accompany the King to Africa would forfeit his income and all civil rights.

A welcome and unexpected addition to the force came from Spain. We have seen that Philip had decided to have nothing to do with the expedition. But he was no more capable of a final decision than he was of honouring a commitment. Equally fearful of the consequences of refusing all aid and of lending any aid at all to so hazardous an undertaking, he had characteristically compromised by sending Sebastian a force of two thousand Castilians, enough, he felt, to save his face and not more than he could afford to lose if the worst came to the worst. By the end of June, therefore, Sebastian must have had in Lisbon and its neighbourhood about sixteen thousand men under arms.

It was nearly midsummer and too late in the year to go campaigning in Africa with armour-clad troops. In his first expedition, four years earlier, Sebastian had landed in Morocco in August and must have experienced the high temperatures, sometimes rising to 115° F., which are usual at that season. He had also the experience of his garrisons in the *fronteiras* to draw upon. But he was not one to take warning from his own or other people's experiences. It is improbable that his impetuous nature allowed him to give any thought to climatic considerations. If it did he must have realised that if there was to be any postponement on their account it would have to be till the following spring. With the coming of autumn the Atlantic coast of Morocco is made very dangerous by

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 438.

sudden gales of great violence blowing up from the west and south-west. Even within the Straits, where the wind is less violent, the autumn can be a very perilous season for shipping. There must have been many alive who remembered one of the greatest shipwrecks in history which, in October 1541, had befallen Charles's attack on Algiers. A three days' storm had strewn the coast for miles around with the wreckage of a hundred and fifty of the Emperor's vessels. Again, as recently as 1574, Don John had lost many vessels in a September storm when attempting to recover Tunis from the Turks. The hazards on the Atlantic coast would be infinitely greater.

Next to abandoning the whole foolish enterprise, the wisest course would have been to postpone it till the following year. But long before then the force which had taken a year and a half to assemble would have melted away. It would be impossible to find pay for the mercenaries and without it they would certainly disband themselves and either return to their homes or prey upon the countryside. That Philip would again furnish Castilians was highly improbable. The Portuguese troops, who had only been brought together under compulsion, could never be reassembled by the time they were again required. If the expedition was ever to sail it must go at once, regardless of the consequences.

The ships in every port of the kingdom were commandeered, every available sail, whether home or foreign, being required for the transport of men, horses, mules, oxen, munitions and stores. The galleons and galleys lay in the Tagus waiting to embark the troops. The whole kingdom was thrown into a fever of excitement which reached its highest pitch in Lisbon where the chaos resulting from ignorance of the most elementary requirements of military organisation excited the ridicule of the foreign community. "It was strange", wrote one of them, "to see the Portuguese furnish themselves to war; for being an exercise that requireth order and measure, all things were there disordered and confused: The faults which were committed in taking musters, giving of pay, superfluity in many things, and defect in other, were infinite." Instead of equipping themselves suitably for a rigorous campaign the nobility "after a new prodigious manner attired themselves

## LISBON

like unto the Castilians, instead of succouring their arms, they guarded their habits, for corselets they provided doublets of silk and gold, they were charged with sugar and conserves instead of water and biscuit: The vessels of silver, and the tents lined with silk and satin were without number, every gentleman went furnished like a king, and the poor soldiers died for hunger: To conclude, it seemed they supposed that he that went bravest and best furnished with delights, and pleasures, should soonest conquer the enemy; contrary to the opinion of true soldiers.”<sup>1</sup>

In a despatch to Madrid, Juan de Silva remarked that the Portuguese troops had at last begun to lose their fear of their fire-arms but that he was not prepared to say they would not be afraid of the enemy. The Spanish ambassador was a prejudiced observer, but there is no lack of independent evidence that Sebastian’s preparations for war were theatrical rather than practical. The Fugger agent in Lisbon was particularly amused by the great number of state coaches in which the nobles intended riding into battle. “My only doubt”, wrote an English correspondent in Madrid, “is whether they are all soldiers.”

It had been Sebastian’s intention to entrust the realm during his absence in Africa to the old and infirm Cardinal Henry. This was not out of any liking for his great-uncle. He detested no one more, for the Cardinal had done all he could to obstruct him in carrying out his plan, but there was none else of the blood royal to appoint. Henry, however, selfish and determined not to be even indirectly associated with the coming campaign, refused to accept the responsibility. Sebastian therefore appointed a Council of State to carry on the government. Its members were Jorge de Almeida, Archbishop of Lisbon, Pedro de Alcaçova, Francisco de Sa and Jorge Mascarenhas. To these he entrusted his seal with full powers to act for him in his absence.

The expedition was at last ready, or as ready as Sebastian and his incompetent favourites could hope to make it. The Papal Legate had arrived with the Crusada; the ships were lying in the Tagus, the capital was crowded with the nobility and the troops

<sup>1</sup> J. Conestaggio *The Historie of the Uniting of the Kingdom of Portugal to the Crowne of Castell*, London 1600, p. 25.

were encamped all around. The King gave the order to embark, but the troops were so dispirited that they obeyed only under compulsion. Even the nobles showed great reluctance to leave their comfortable quarters ashore. Thus the day ordered for sailing passed without the expedition getting aboard the transports. On 17 June the King attended divine service in the cathedral where the standard, embroidered with an imperial crown, which he was to carry with him into Africa was blessed amid great pomp. But a week had still to elapse before he could get all his men aboard as well as the stores and immense quantities of impedimenta.

Never before and never since was so strange an expedition embarked for foreign conquest. The fighting men numbered about fourteen thousand infantry and two thousand cavalry. Of these about 10,000 were Portuguese—2,000 cavalry commanded by the Duke d'Aveiro, 2,500 *Aventuros*, gentlemen volunteers paying their own expenses,<sup>1</sup> under Alvaro Pires de Tavora, and the rest were miserable levies commanded by the four colonels who had impressed them, Miguel de Noronha, Diego Lopez de Sequiera, Francisco de Tavora, and Vasco de Silveira. There was also an artillery train of thirty-six cannon commanded by Pedro de Mesquita, a knight of Malta. The foreign troops were the 3,000 Germans under Martin of Burgundy, Philip's 2,000 Castilians under Alfonso de Aguilar and the 600 papal troops under Sir Thomas Stukeley with Hercule de Pisa as his second-in-command. We shall have an opportunity of inspecting the arms and equipment of this force before we see it go into battle.

Besides fighting men there was a considerable body of pioneers who were required to assist in the capture of Larache. But the pioneers formed only a small proportion of the extraordinary collection of non-combatants with whom Sebastian encumbered his expedition. These totalled nearly as many as the fighting men. A very great number were the retainers of the King and his nobles who were to mitigate for their masters the rigours of the campaign by ensuring, so far as was possible, the same degree of elegance, dignity and luxury as they were accustomed to enjoy at court.

<sup>1</sup> Similar to the *Aventuriers* employed in the armies of France at this time.

These retainers included pages, musicians, personal servants, negro slaves, mulattoes and serving women; they were all required for the service of the great. The only provision for the needs of the common soldiers was a considerable company of prostitutes. But the women were not all of the lower orders. Hercule de Pisa had his wife with him and probably many others were similarly accompanied. Some of the women had even brought their children.

The Church was strongly represented. Besides the Papal Legate and Papal Nuncio, somewhere on those crowded transports were the Bishop of Coimbra and the Bishop of Oporto; probably Stukeley's Irish bishop as well. The great dignitaries of the Church, no less jealous of their prestige than the nobles, were accompanied by a company of priests representing every religious order in Portugal and numbering over a thousand.

The bodily needs of so many temporal and spiritual lords was not to be satisfied with personal retainers only. They required, each in proportion to his rank and precedence, pavilions and chapels, sumptuous vestments and costly apparel, food and drink such as they were accustomed to, and silver and gold plate for its service. Well over a thousand wagons had to be embarked to carry this impedimenta. In addition there were the state coaches of the court and nobility. How many horses, mules and oxen were embarked for the cavalry, guns and transport we do not know, but they must have totalled many hundreds.

In attendance on the King himself were his favourites and the greatest of the nobles. First among the latter was the ten-year-old Duke of Barcellos, representing his father the great Duke of Braganza whom illness had kept at home. Others with the King were his incompetent Intendent-General, the Count of Vimioso, the Duke d'Aveiro, Luiz da Silva, Christovão de Tavora and Francisco de Melo who had his three sons with him. The King had chosen as his chief subordinate—his *maréchal-de-camp*—Duarte de Meneses, the governor of Tangier, who was to join him in Africa.

The embarkation was completed on 24 June, Midsummer Day and the Feast of St John, a day of processions and rejoicing in Portugal. There was another day's delay awaiting a fair wind.

Then "to the great pleasure and contentment of the King, who young and unskilful, guided by some sinister star, or by that divine permission which would punish this people, went into Africa, to a dangerous (although a glorious) enterprise, leaving the Realm emptied of money, naked of Nobility, without heirs, and in the hands of ill affected governors."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 29.



*Africa Invaded*

THE CITIZENS OF LISBON hurried out to Belem to watch the grand spectacle of the expedition's departure. There, lying in the Tagus about three miles below the capital, were many hundreds of ships of varying sizes. Those which attracted most attention were the long war-galleys, banked with oars and carrying nearly all the nobles and fidalgos of Portugal. Next in interest were the tall galleons, already unfurling their sails, their decks crowded with troops. From every mast-head a long pennant streamed gaily before the wind. Galleys and galleons alike, as well as the lesser craft, sparkled brightly as the sun caught the body armour and swaying pike-heads of the fighting men and lit up the gay colours of their battle banners.

Rising high above the heads of the crowds lining the shore was the splendid façade of the Convent of the Jeronimos with its superb church of Santa Maria. The finest example of Manueline architecture, the history and oriental exuberance of the convent were appropriate to the occasion. Founded to commemorate the sailing of Vasco da Gama to discover the sea-route to India, it had become the final resting place of the Portuguese sovereigns. From the elephants of the royal sarcophagi to the statue of Prince Henry the Navigator on a corbel of the church door, it symbolised the proudest traditions of the people. Built of white limestone from the neighbouring quarries of Alcantara and not many years completed, it made a dazzling background to a scene which was as moving as it was rich in colour.

Close by, and rising out of the river just below the assembled fleet, was that splendid little fortress the Torre de Belem. Contemporary with the great convent and of no less significance, it

had been built as a bastion to protect the anchorage from sea-borne attack. Its battlements were crowned by towers of a curious Hindu design and decorated with the armorial shields of the Knights of the Order of Christ, its traditional defenders. It was probably here that Sebastian himself, like the great sea-captains and viceroys of earlier days, embarked. But of all the many thousands there, ashore and afloat, only the King and his sycophants, nearly as witless as himself, were of a temper attuned to the splendour of the scene.

Few events are more stirring than the departure of an army for service overseas. The patriotic fervour awakened by the high spirits of the troops with flags flying and drums beating conceals the heaviness of the proud hearts left behind. The lusty cheers of the fighting men, the sound of their marching songs and the strains of martial music carry assurance of victory. But no such sounds reached the ears of those who watched Sebastian and his army glide down the Tagus past the Convent of the Jeronimos, waving their last farewells as they left the Torre de Belem behind them. It was an impressive but uninspiring spectacle. Among all those fighting men not one could raise a cheer to hearten the weeping crowds ashore. No beat of drum, no trumpet-call nor sound of flute drifted across the waters of the Tagus. It was not in some great cause which awakened either patriotism or religious fervour that these men were about to risk their lives. They were going into battle to satisfy the inexorable and selfish ambition of an untried youth. In the undisciplined and protesting rabble that crowded the decks there was nothing to inspire the pride with which a people customarily speeds its warriors. That they were a broken and defeated army before ever they set their reluctant feet aboard their transports few of them, or of the morose and silent crowds ashore, appear to have doubted.

Omens of disaster were not lacking. The King's galley carried away by the current, got out of control, fouled a Flemish ship and broke its rudder; a cannon shot, fired accidentally from the shore, killed a seaman on the royal galley. In these untoward happenings men saw their worst apprehensions foreshadowed. Nevertheless, even those with the darkest forebodings can scarcely have imagined

the full measure of the disaster which lay before the departing army.

The first port of call was Lagos which, with the help of a following wind, the expedition reached on 28 June. Here they embarked the levies that had been raised in Algarve and here, too, they were joined by some more ships. They also took aboard a certain Portuguese merchant, a spy in the Shereef's pay.

Of the great fleet which put out to sea ten days later only five galleys and fifty other ships were armed. The rest were mostly barques carrying the horses of the cavalry, transport animals, stores and munitions. Sebastian next called at Cadiz where, on Spanish soil, he was entertained by the Duke of Medina Sidonia, governor and captain-general of Andalusia and commandant of the African Coast. Only a few weeks had passed since the Duke had been sent to Lisbon with Philip's final appeal to abandon the African enterprise. In Cadiz, during the feasting and the bull-fights with which he sought to entertain his royal guest, the Duke made a final attempt to dissuade Sebastian from accompanying the expedition any further, but again he failed. After a week in port, during which the omission to mount any guards did not escape record, the fleet sailed for Africa.

In a few days the expedition reached a place called Almadraes which has not been identified but it must have been between Tangier and Arzila, perhaps at the mouth of the little Wad Tahaddart. Leaving the rest of the expedition at anchor, Sebastian sailed with five galleys and four galleons to Tangier where the Black Sultan, Mulai Mohammed, was awaiting him. The latter's twelve-year-old son, Mulai ech-Cheikh, was at once despatched southward with a Portuguese officer, Martin Correa de Silva, and a mixed force of Moslem and Christian horsemen from the Tangier garrison. Their orders were to travel hurriedly overland to the southerly district of Mazagan where they were to raise a rebellion in the Shereef's rear. Sebastian, after taking aboard the 600 arquebusiers forming the rest of the Tangier garrison and replacing them with raw conscripts from home, rejoined the main body of the expedition accompanied by Mulai Mohammed.

The whole fleet then sailed south intending to land at Larache, but they put into Arzila, the newly recovered *fronteira*, for water.

They anchored there on 12 July and sent the men ashore to fill the casks. Even this simple operation disorganised the expedition. Once on land the men refused to re-embark and there was difficulty in getting water aboard, so the expedition had to remain at Arzila. The army fortified its camp, throwing up earthworks on the sides unprotected by the sea or the neighbouring town. This delay, following the days wasted at Cadiz and Tangier, destroyed all hope of surprising the enemy. The chance of doing so can never have been very great for the Shereef had kept himself well informed about Sebastian and his plans since the inception of his enterprise. With agents in the Andalusian ports as well as in Melilla and Peñon de Velez, which were trading regularly with Spain, he had had no difficulty in finding out what was going on in Lisbon. Sebastian had been well aware of the channels of information the Shereef was using and had repeatedly but unsuccessfully pressed Philip to close his ports to Moorish merchants and seamen.

The news of the landing of the invaders spread alarm throughout the narrow peninsula which here separates the Atlantic from the Mediterranean. The Moors of Larache, Tetuan and other ports abandoned their towns and fled to the mountains with their women.

Meanwhile Europe was still speculating on the destination of the expedition. A letter from Rome to London dated 12 July, the day on which Sebastian landed at Arzila, gave warning of a revival of the rumour that the Portuguese objective was England. "Although it has been said more than once", it read, "that the preparations made by the King of Portugal, though ostensibly against Africa, were in truth designed against the Queen of England, little credence is given thereto, since it is well known how many fleets have without combat been undone by the exceeding great natural strength of that island, aided by the rapid fall of the tides: nevertheless there is now a resurgence of the rumour that the preparations are to this end, and that the confederates are the Pope, the Catholic King, the King of Portugal and the Grand Duke of Tuscany".<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Calendar of State Papers, Rome 1572-78*, p. 469.

The Shereef, on the other hand, knew all about the movements of his enemies. On 2 July, when he was in the extreme south of his kingdom on the road from Marrakech to Sus, news reached him of Sebastian having sailed from Lisbon only a week before. He immediately returned to Marrakech and from there declared a *jihad* against the Christians and gave orders for the immediate assembly of all the fighting men in his dominions. Hard-riding couriers were despatched into every part of the kingdom with a summons to arms demanding the immediate obedience of vassals and feudatories. Entrusting the defence of the capital to his Purveyor-General, a Portuguese renegade named Radouan, the Shereef marched north to El-Khamis and from there into the district of Tamesna where, on 6 July, he heard that the Portuguese had arrived at Cadiz. He remained in camp for a few days suffering from dysentery and fever which had not abated when he reached Salce on the 14th. There he heard that the Portuguese had landed at Arzila two days previously.

While he was in camp at Tamesna and, to quote a contemporary chronicler, "weighing how much better an ill peace is than a just war", he resolved to make a final effort to come to terms with Sebastian. He wrote him a letter in which he pointed out that the war he was about to wage was unjust, for its object was not to champion one Moor against another but to conquer the country. He rightly declared that Mulai Mohammed's promises would be found worthless and that the negro pretender was at heart a greater enemy of Christians than himself. He offered to surrender to Sebastian any maritime town he liked to choose and to cede "for tillage" ten miles of territory around each of the Portuguese fortresses in his kingdom.

This last offer was more important than would appear. As we have already seen, troops garrisoning these isolated *fronteiras* were never safe outside their protecting walls. Unable to till the neighbouring soil and therefore dependent on imported food they were a heavy charge on the crown. The incompetence of the officials at home and the difficulties of navigation in the perilous narrow seas sometimes left the garrisons short of supplies for long periods. Life in the *fronteiras* was therefore precarious and

unpopular, and desertions to the Moors were frequent. The maintenance of the garrisons was also a constant worry to the administration. The concession suggested by the Shereef was therefore a valuable one.

The letter ended with a hint of the likelihood of Turkish intervention in support of the Moors and a very weak suggestion of arbitration by Portuguese judges. It did little credit to the Shereef, but at the time he drafted it he was a sick man, far sicker indeed than he or anyone else at the time realised.

The letter must have reached Sebastian at Arzila. He rejected the offer, protesting in his reply that he had already been put to such great expense in raising troops that nothing less than the cession of Tetuan, Larache and Agadir would satisfy him. The negotiations then came to an end, the Shereef declaring that what he had won by the sword he would defend with the sword.

Abd el-Malck probably received and rejected Sebastian's counter-proposals while he was at Salee. From there, on or about the 16th, he moved northward along the coast accompanied by a substantial and rapidly growing force, already numbering 14,000 horsemen and 2,500 arquebusiers. He also had some artillery with him. Turning west he camped on the outskirts of the great Forest of Mamora where he cast four more cannon, one of which he sent back to Marrakech to strengthen the defences of the capital. He then continued his northward march, crossed the Wad Sebou and, on the 24th, went into camp at Suk el-Khamis, having covered about 350 miles in three weeks, which was hard travelling for a very sick man weighed down by heavy responsibilities. At Suk el-Khamis, which lay six miles south of the town of El-Ksar el-Kebir, the Shereef was sixty miles from Larache and half as far again from Arzila, and well placed strategically at the base of the peninsula which was directly threatened by the invaders.

The Shereef's illness had now become very serious. He had been vomiting and suffering from ague since before his arrival at Salee; he had an unslakeable thirst and could not eat. In spite of his ebbing strength he often insisted on riding his horse instead of travelling in his litter. The symptoms and the Shereef's refusal to

spare himself almost drove his Jewish physician out of his wits. "I was weeping and crying before him like a madman",<sup>1</sup> he wrote. The Shereef had arrived at Suk el-Khamis in a litter but had mounted his horse to receive his brother, Mulai Ahmed el-Mansur, who was awaiting him with 22,000 horse and 5,500 foot. Ahmed, as custom demanded, dismounted and kissed the ground in front of the Shereef while the army fired volleys in salute, the traditional *lab el-barud* or powder-play of the Moors. When the doctor told el-Mansur that the Shereef's illness might prove fatal he was warned to keep his fear to himself.

At Suk el-Khamis news was received of the small force Sebastian had sent to raise a revolt at Mazagan, far away to the south. Two thousand horse and some foot were now sent to intercept them. Another force, under Kaid ed-Deghali, had been sent to Agadir to oppose an expected landing there, but when the Shereef heard that the enemy had landed at Arzila he had them recalled.

Abd el-Malek had reason to suspect the loyalty of some of his men. This was inevitable with so great an army gathered, and in most cases impressed, from a large number of scattered tribes many of whom had no feelings of obligation towards the Shereef. The Shereef himself was a usurper and little more than two years had passed since Mulai Mohammed had ruled the land. There must have been many in the camp to whom Mohammed rather than Abd el-Malek seemed the rightful ruler. The former had indeed allied himself to an infidel invader, but it had been with the scarcely less discreditable aid of Turkey that his successor had seized the throne. Two years had been too short a time for the Shereef to win the confidence of untamed tribesmen or to impress them with the qualities of leadership which made him worthy of the throne he had seized. His greatest danger therefore was the black treachery which only shows itself when battle is joined. To counter it then would be impossible and its consequences would almost certainly be disastrous. Immediate steps had therefore to be taken to rid his army of so great a peril.

He announced that any man who did not wish to march against

<sup>1</sup> *Calendar of State Papers, Foreign 1578-1579*, p. 165.

Mulai Mohammed might depart unconditionally. Lest men should fail to obey their inclination through fear of advertising their disaffection, the Shereef ordered three thousand of those whose loyalty he most suspected to go and harry the Christians encamped outside Arzila. His intention was that they should seize so convenient an opportunity for desertion. Surprised and flattered at such an unexpected show of confidence, all but a few resolved to be true to the Shereef and zealously perform the duties entrusted to them. Arrived at Arzila, they split into small parties, cut off any Portuguese stragglers they found wandering beyond the protecting earthworks and kept the invaders in a constant state of apprehension.

The Portuguese were well situated although they were in no mood to appreciate it. Their camp was adequately fortified as well as being protected by the sea and a friendly town, while close in-shore their transports rode at anchor. Yet when Abd el-Malek's raiders sent forward a party of horsemen to reconnoitre their position some of the Portuguese panicked and made for their ships. They were prevented by their officers from embarking which only increased their fear. Many fled northwards up the coast hoping to reach Tangier, but they fell into the hands of the Moors of Tetuan who had now taken the field and were astride the road.

Sebastian at least had the courage which so many of his men lacked, but his was the blind courage of the fanatic, not the cool contempt of danger which war demands. When two thousand horsemen appeared before his camp he rode out to engage them with only six hundred. The enemy withdrew but Sebastian, either because his men were too ill-mounted or too frightened to follow him, pursued the enemy with only a single companion. He managed somehow to return safely from this foolish escapade which he described in a despatch to Lisbon, written in his own hand, as a military triumph. A different view of the incident was taken by his captains. Well knowing how much hung on the King's personal safety, they saw in this latest manifestation of the royal lightheadedness increased cause for apprehension.

Abd el-Malek and his army were still at Suk el-Khamis. He was



awaiting the arrival of more troops from Tetuan and Meknes, but it was part of his plan to remain where he was. He wanted to draw the invaders inland where there were rivers and hills and swamps to hinder their movements, and where the absence of inhabitants and cultivation would make it impossible for them to live on the country. Once he had drawn them away from the coast he could cut them off from their fleet and, if he chose, refuse battle until they were worn out by hunger and hard marching and disorganised by the difficult country they would have to cross. If he could achieve this, his great superiority in numbers might give him a bloodless victory. So the Moors waited at Suk el-Khamis to see what Sebastian would do. Although they were hoping that he would advance against them it seemed more likely that he would go south to Larache, by the easy coast road or by sea. In either event they were on the right side of the Wad Loukkos, the ancient Lixus, to intercept him at Larache,

The course Sebastian was to pursue was as much in doubt in the Portuguese camp as in that of the Moors. Sitting behind earthworks outside Arzila was not going to win him Morocco. Larache, where he had originally intended to land, was his next objective. It lay on the southern bank of the Lixus across which there was no ford nearer than Mechara en-Nedjma, ten miles below El-Ksar el-Kebir and the same distance from Larache. But the ford was twice as far from Arzila and in the heart of the enemy's country, and to reach it Sebastian would have to take his army well out of touch with the fleet which was their only refuge apart from Arzila. The obvious course was to re-embark and proceed by sea, but Sebastian objected to this. He had no wish to repeat the confusion of his previous disembarkation. He may even have feared that his men, once aboard, would refuse to set foot again in Africa. The ships, too, were still without water. The King had made up his mind to go to Larache by the El-Ksar road. A perilous overland march of some thirty-five miles to reach a point only twenty safe miles away by sea was an attraction which the scatter-brained youth could not resist.

The adoption of such a course would be a violation of one of the conditions on which Philip had granted Spanish aid—that

the expedition was to be confined to an attack on Larache by sea and that there was to be no penetration of the interior. Sebastian was hesitant to the extent of seeking the support of his captains. But by the time they had been summoned they knew the advice he wanted and the futility of offering him any other. All were agreed that Larache should be the next objective, but none honestly approved the route the King had chosen. Few of those who favoured the obvious course of going by sea—and they must have been the great majority—dared say so. Some, seeking only to benefit themselves and therefore ready to approve any plan the King favoured, advised the inland route. The basest of these was the Intendent-General, Vimioso, whose incompetence and parsimony had brought the Ceuta expedition of 1574 near to starvation and himself into disgrace. None knew better than him the hazards involved in the King's intention, but he hoped by loudly applauding the King's resolve to restore himself to royal favour. The Portuguese, he declared, were already masters of the field, free to move fearlessly where they willed; that they were inferior in numbers to the enemy was of no account for all the world knew that a Moor was no match for a Christian; to re-embark now, he argued, would excite the ridicule of Philip and his people who would mock the Portuguese for fearing to tread the soil of Africa.

To one man this hypocrisy was unendurable. Luiz da Silva, one of the King's chief favourites, rose and spoke his mind. Why, he asked, set off on what might well prove a perilous march when the fleet could carry them safely by sea to Larache? All they needed was to furnish the ships with the little water required for so short a voyage; the strength and whereabouts of the Moors were unknown and if the Portuguese went by land the enemy might slip in behind them and cut them off from the coast and the ships on which they depended for their supplies.

A middle course was then proposed. This was to march down the coast using, it was naïvely suggested, the wagons of the baggage train to protect their exposed left flank and keeping the fleet close at hand to provide either boats for the crossing of the Lixus or, in case of need, a convenient refuge. Those who favoured the

sea passage were prepared to accept this compromise but the King's resolve to take the inland road remained unshaken.

A final attempt to dissuade the King was made by Mulai Mohammed who was already regretting the day he had sought Christian help. As the result of what he had seen of Sebastian and his army Mohammed's fear that a Portuguese victory would result in his becoming merely a puppet of Portugal had given place to the more alarming conviction that if the Portuguese had to fight defeat would be inevitable. At all costs therefore, a clash with Abd el-Malek's forces must be avoided. He implored Sebastian to go by sea. His hope was that the King, after occupying Larache, might be content to return to Portugal himself, leaving the army to his own more skilful hands. But the Moor was no more successful than Luiz da Silva and his friends. The King's purpose was inexorably fixed.

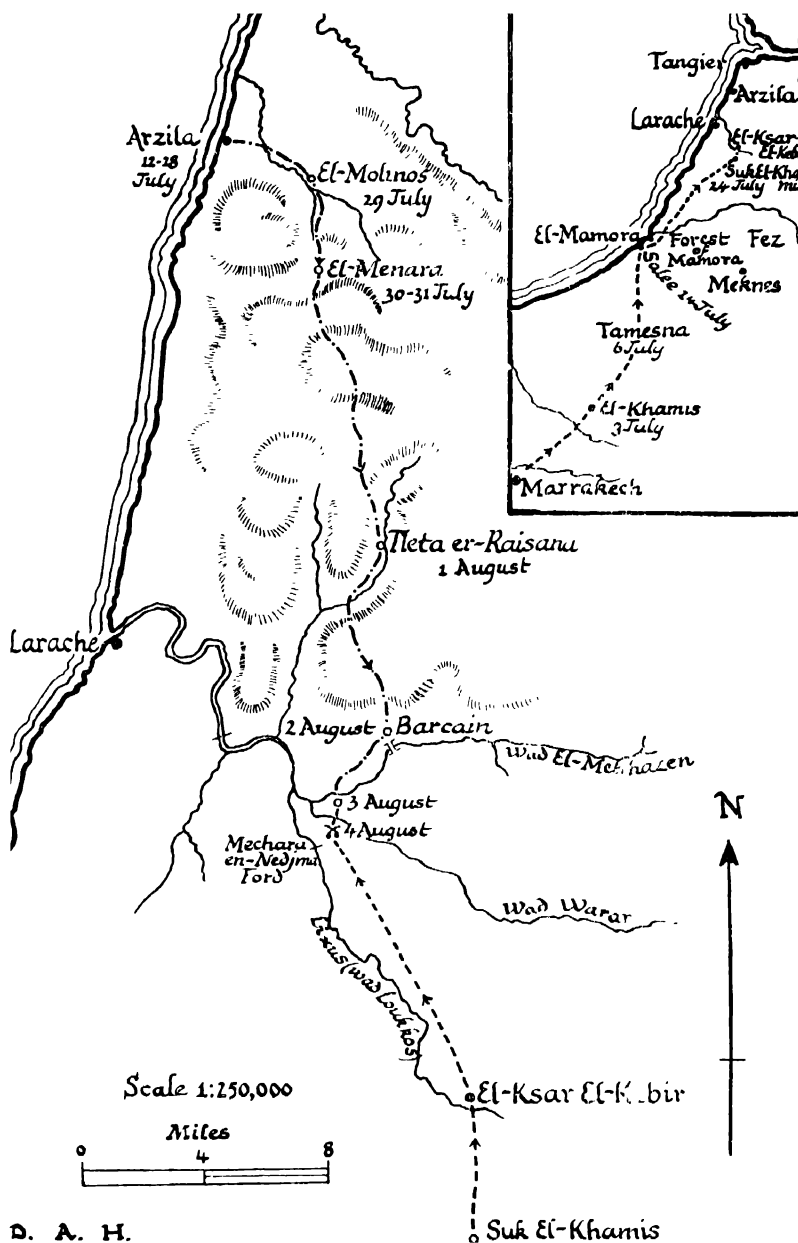
## *The Road to El-Ksar*

THE FORCE which Sebastian led out of the Arzila entrenchments on Monday, 29 July, was about 16,000 strong, leaving out of account the pioneers. It should have made a brave show—the King and his nobles sheathed in steel,<sup>1</sup> the great ones in their state coaches, the lesser mounted on their chargers; the arquebusiers, pikemen, halberdiers and gunners in corselet and morion;<sup>2</sup> the cavalry armoured and armed with lance and sabre; and the royal emblems and regimental colours fluttering over the heads of the marching host. Nevertheless the people of Arzila were not as impressed as they should have been that morning as they watched all the chivalry of Portugal go marching by.

It was not until this strange column took the road that men realised the full measure of the King's stupidity in encumbering his army as he had. At every step it was hindered by thousands of non-combatants and the wildly extravagant and useless impedimenta which had been deemed necessary to the dignity and

<sup>1</sup> Firearms were already influencing the use of armour on man and horse. The *cap-à-pied* suit of plate was beginning to go out of fashion in the interests of mobility, but it was still widely worn by those who could afford it. Battle armour, as opposed to the highly decorative parade armour of the tilt-yard, was of the plain unornamental style of the previous century with the addition of a chain-mail skirt.

<sup>2</sup> The extent to which common soldiers wore armour partly depended upon the financial resources of those whom they served. Pikemen, who had to hold charging cavalry and therefore continued to wear armour after it had been given up by other arms, customarily wore a morion, a high pointed helmet with closed visor, and a corselet of breastplate, backplate, pauldrons for the shoulders and tassets for the thighs. Arquebusiers and cavalry were probably more lightly armoured, but the morion was almost universal.



DON SEBASTIAN'S MARCH FROM ARZILA AND ABD EL-MALEK'S  
MARCH FROM MARRAKECH (inset map).

well-being of Portuguese chivalry in the field. The hundreds of priests and the horde of pages, musicians, servants, negroes, mulattoes, wives, serving women and prostitutes, instead of being left aboard, were still with the army, and probably their children as well. They numbered as many as the fighting men.

In order to reduce the baggage train the common soldiers had each been given five days' rations, which were expected to last until they rejoined the fleet at Larache. Nevertheless the transport wagons numbered no less than 1,120. Except for the munition wagons carrying powder and arms, the transport was wholly given up to the extravagant needs of the King, the nobles and the *fidalgos*. The nobility had, as we have seen, further encumbered the column with their lumbering state coaches. No transport whatever was provided for the humble needs of the common soldiers. How many wagons were reserved for the King's personal use we do not know, but we have a clear indication of the grotesque scale on which the nobles were provided for. The ten year-old Duke of Barcellos had with him twenty-two pavilions for his personal use, all of which were carried in the baggage train. Both he and the King had their own portable chapels and valuable plate for the celebration of mass. Each was accompanied by his own musicians.

Sebastian's manner of going to war may seem preposterous, but allowance must be made for the different customs of those days. If we go sixty-five years further back we find in the story of Henry VIII's Tournay campaign two close analogies to the ostentatious extravagance, both temporal and spiritual, of Sebastian's expedition. "It will hardly be credited", wrote Sir Charles Oman, "that on his Tournay campaign of 1513 (Henry VIII) took with him the whole establishment of his Chapel Royal, 115 priests and choristers, as also a 'house of timber', requiring fourteen wagons for its transport, an immense tent of cloth of gold, and an innumerable list of minor pavilions: his wardrobe tent alone was 45 feet long by 15 feet broad! No wonder that with such impedimenta his marching record was about equivalent to that of a snail."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Sir Charles Oman. *The Sixteenth Century*, London 1936, p. 105.

Lest it be argued that so flamboyant a character as Henry VIII was not typical of the period, let us recall how in that same year, 1513, the hardy Scots took the field at Flodden. Their nobles left on the field four thousand feather beds and drinking vessels of gold and silver. And, according to popular report, there was no lack of women in their camp. The Church, too, was singularly well represented. The thousands of Scottish dead included the Archbishop of St Andrews (a twenty-one year old bastard son of King James), the Bishop of Caithness, the Bishop of the Isles, the Dean of Glasgow and the Abbot of Kilwinning. There were nine other abbots who escaped. Thirteen years later at Mohacs, to take a great land battle between Christian and Moslem, two archbishops and eight bishops accompanied the Hungarian army; both the former and five of the latter were killed in action. At Oran in 1509 Cardinal Ximenes had carried a sword and by his orders the numerous priests and monks who had accompanied him had been similarly armed. The Netherlands campaign, which in 1578 was still dragging on, provides a contemporary and therefore fairer comparison by which to judge Sebastian's manner of going to war. There the nobles were often accompanied in the field by wagon-loads of plate, and when in 1568 a French column came to the assistance of William of Orange it had, to quote Motley, "so many women and children, that it seemed rather an emigrating colony than an invading army".

Sebastian's extravagant display and the inclusion of such hundreds of priests in the expedition were not therefore as unusual as might be thought. In regard to the Church, moreover, it must be remembered that no pains had been spared to give the expedition the appearance of a crusade, a pretence to which the Pope had given great encouragement.

Nevertheless, having regard to all the circumstances, we can only regard with amazement the extent to which Sebastian encumbered his army with non-combatants and superfluous impedimenta. He was not even expecting to be long separated from his ships. In a very few days, possibly only five and certainly not more than a week, he would, he thought, be camping outside the walls of Larache with his fleet riding at anchor close by. Why, therefore,

he did not leave aboard the ships at least the women and children and some of the thousands of retainers, as well as much of the baggage and transport, is not easy to explain. It was probably that extreme form of vanity which leads men to flout the unanimous but contrary advice of their counsellors and to defy public opinion, combined with an exaggerated conception of the needs of royal dignity.

Only by the most careful organisation and precise timing of movements can chaos be avoided in moving by road big columns of even highly disciplined troops. A large part of Sebastian's army was untrained and undisciplined; its commanders had shown no capacity for organisation; the road was a mere track leading at first through broken, and later very hilly, country, wholly unsuitable for wheeled transport. Indeed, it is difficult to believe that had all the circumstances been favourable—the troops disciplined, the commanders capable and the road good—it would have been humanly possible to move, with any degree of order, such a column as Sebastian led to war. So great was the chaos that on the first day's march they got no further than El-Molinos, three miles from where they had started.

That one short day's experience of Portuguese road discipline sufficed to confirm the worst fears of the foreign captains among whom there was no lack of experienced soldiers. The commander of the Germans, Martin of Burgundy, was a distinguished soldier who had lately been commanding German troops in the Low Countries; the commander of the Castilians, Alfonso de Aguilar, came from the finest army in Europe; there was also Thomas Stukeley, commanding the papal troops, a rogue but perhaps more experienced in war than any other soldier in the army; finally there was the commander of the artillery, Pedro de Mesquita, a Knight of Malta and therefore to be respected as a soldier. We know little of the capabilities of these men as leaders but each one of them was better qualified to command than Sebastian or his *maréchal-de-camp*, Duarte de Meneses. Moreover, each of them could have given invaluable advice to those to whom these thousands were committed. But because they were foreigners they had no standing in the Portuguese army and



were therefore powerless to influence the King. We can imagine the bitterness of their feelings and the anxious care with which they endeavoured to prevent the confusion of the Portuguese rabble and the discord among its leaders spreading to the ranks of their own men.

They were still more concerned at the blind folly of attempting to lead so fantastic a column of troops through strange country occupied by a war-hardened enemy of unknown strength and undetermined dispositions. Every professional soldier in the column must have known that in the event of a sudden attack it would be impossible to deploy, encumbered as they were. But it was a risk which Sebastian, in spite of so many added disadvantages, was not only prepared to accept but was determined to court. So profound and ill-concealed were the misgivings of these foreign captains that some of the more sensible of the Portuguese nobles were moved to warn the King again of the risks his inland march involved. But he would not listen.

The next day the army resumed its march and the chaos was as great as ever. Again they travelled no more than three miles, reaching El-Menara. But in that short distance they learnt that they were already being closely watched by the enemy. They had seen looking down upon them from a high hill a body of several hundred Moorish horsemen who rode off without interfering with the column. They were obviously a reconnoitring force sent out by the Sherceef. That night, at El-Menara, a report reached Sebastian that the Moorish army was on the march and advancing. He at once sent another despatch to Lisbon, this time addressed to Pedro de Alcaçova, reporting in his irresponsible way the glad news and his hope that the enemy would soon offer battle and suffer the fate that surely awaited them.

The next day, 31 July, came news from the coast that 500 more Castilians had that morning landed at Arzila to join the column. They were commanded by Francisco de Aldana, the experienced and trusted captain whom Philip had previously sent over to Morocco to report on the prospects of a successful invasion. It will be recalled that in spite of having endeavoured to discourage Sebastian from his project, Aldana had secured the King's

respect and some degree of confidence. Sebastian decided to remain that day at El-Menara to await the arrival of the Castilians and their gallant captain.

Aldana reached the Portuguese camp before night-fall, bearing with him a letter and presents from the Duke of Alva. The gifts were the helmet and silk tabard worn by the Emperor Charles V when, forty-three years before, he had ridden as a conqueror into Tunis. The helmet perhaps had only been sent to bring good luck to the wearer, but a much more practical purpose lay behind the other gift. Tabards, loose fitting surcoats worn over armour, were out of fashion, but Alva knew what by now Sebastian and thousands of those with him had already learnt from brief but bitter experience. That was the insufferable heat of naked armour under an African sun.

Aldana cannot have expected to find Sebastian conducting his campaign on orthodox military lines for he knew too well the King's weaknesses and the puerility of his lordly retinue. He knew also how little regard for the realities of war there had been in the preparations for the campaign. Great as must have been his apprehensions they fell far short of the appalling reality.

It would be wrong to say that the organisation of the army had broken down for, from the start, there had not been any organisation. The camp, instead of being laid out in an orderly military manner, presented a scene of indescribable confusion. Even more disturbing was the demoralised state of the fighting men. Owing to the incompetence and inadequacy of the commissariat there was already a shortage of food. It was only three days since the march had begun, but many of the men had no rations left, having sold, gambled or thrown away what had been issued to them, as is the way with raw recruits. To hunger was added the exhaustion of having to wear body armour under the rays of a sun so fierce that it made the steel almost unbearable to the wearer.

Helplessness was greatest among the Portuguese soldiery. Under-nourished and debilitated by the diseases which especially afflict the poor, they had been unfit to endure any sort of hardship from the day of their impressment. To their bodily ills had been added the anguish of forced service oversea against a dreaded

enemy. After nearly a month of privation and discomfort at sea in overcrowded ships they had been landed on a hostile shore in a state of utter misery which had been greatly aggravated by the two days' march and the growing proximity of an enemy against whom they did not know how to defend themselves. At the time of Aldana's arrival they were completely demoralised and, we cannot doubt, infecting others with the virus of broken morale.

We know nothing of the state of the civilians. They were spared the wearing of armour, but they probably suffered from neglect more than the soldiers and were less able to take care of themselves. The condition of the women must have been especially pitiful.

The sight of all this dismayed Aldana. He was enraged that Sebastian should have chosen the inland route to Larache. It was a breach of his undertaking to Philip and, from a military standpoint, an act of sheer madness, especially in the company of those thousands of helpless civilians. So appalled was he at the condition to which Sebastian had reduced his army in so short a time and at his refusal to abandon his plans, that he decided to return at once to the coast and re-embark for Spain. In spite of his indignation, which he does not appear to have disguised, he still retained the confidence of the King who was determined he should stay with the army. In the end he agreed to remain and quickly set about righting the chaos which surrounded him; but he was heavily handicapped by the inherent contempt of the Portuguese for foreigners, especially Spaniards, which even the King's support was unable to break down.

Sebastian resumed his march on the morning following Aldana's arrival. The army camped that night at Tleta cr-Raisana having covered no less than twelve miles, or four times the distance they had marched on each of the first two days. As the country was still hilly the achievement can only have been due to improved organisation brought about, one is tempted to believe, by the wise counsel of Aldana. The following day, 2 August, the army marched about ten miles and camped at Barcain.

The next day, which was a Sunday, the Portuguese, already exhausted by the rough and broken country, reached the Mekhazen river, a tributary of the Lixus, close to where it debouches from the hills on to the great plain stretching north from the town of El-Ksar el-Kebir (Alcazar). At the point where the Portuguese struck the river there was a bridge—its ruins may still be seen—by which Sebastian had intended to cross. The bridge, however, was held by a body of enemy horsemen, estimated to be two thousand strong. The King decided not to attempt to force a passage but to make for a ford, about three miles down stream, of which he had heard from Mulai Mohammed's men. He accordingly turned south and, following the right bank, found the ford undefended. Although the river here is only fifty yards wide the ford was so narrow that it took the whole day and a great deal of assistance from the pioneers to get the army across. The narrowness of the ford and the circumstances that at this point, close to its junction with the Lixus, the Mekhazen was tidal and its banks steep became factors of some importance a few hours later.

The Portuguese were now within three miles of Mechara en-Nedjma. This was the ford across the Lixus which had been the reason for Sebastian choosing the perilous inland route rather than the coastal road which would have necessitated a more difficult though, owing to its proximity to the sea, a much less hazardous crossing of the river at its mouth. Once across the Lixus they would be only two days' easy march from Larache with, it was hoped, their worst perils behind them. The ford therefore was their immediate and all-important objective.

Between the Portuguese and the Lixus there was a small stream, the Wad Warur, which the advance guard crossed while the main body were still wading slowly through the Mekhazen. But the advance guard returned exceedingly quickly for on the other side of the stream they had found themselves unexpectedly close to a detachment of shereefian horsemen. They had probably also caught sight of the Moorish main body who were close at hand in numbers which may well have awed them. Sebastian decided to bring the rest of his army across the Mekhazen and to camp where he was on the south bank with the ford at his back and the

Wad Warur at his front. Meanwhile parties of enemy horsemen hovered round, keeping the Portuguese under close observation.

Abd el-Malek had been well served by his spies. He knew that it was Sebastian's intention to use the ford at Mechara en-Nedjma and he had decided to deny him its passage. But, fearful lest over-eagerness on his part should turn the King from his inland course, he had remained at Suk el-Khamis until he had heard that the Christians were drawing near.

On Saturday, 2 August, the day on which Sebastian reached Barcain, the Shereef had moved his army forward through El-Ksar el-Kebir.<sup>1</sup> It was a small but ancient town which had perhaps originated as a Greek settlement and had certainly been a Roman one. It was probably much more prosperous than the squalid little township of to-day, for early in the century the Portuguese had endeavoured, but had failed, to add it to the number of their *fronteiras*.

Abd el-Malek took up a strong position about twelve miles beyond the town commanding the approach to the ford and facing north-west, the direction from which the invaders were approaching. Before him lay an open plain, broken only by the little Wad Warur, where he could use to advantage the great body of cavalry on which he depended for victory. Beyond the treeless plain, which was parched dusty and brown by the summer heat, lay the Mckhazen and further away the hills from which it sprang and through which lay the route of the invaders. It would have been easy for the Shereef to rout the Portuguese army as they pursued their tortuous way through that broken hilly country, but had he done so it would have been difficult to prevent the escape of large numbers of survivors. As he was determined to annihilate the enemy he waited out on the open plain where, he hoped, his many thousands of horsemen would ensure that few, if any, of the invaders escaped. Confident of the issue, he had already sent

<sup>1</sup> Literally the Great Fortress or Walled Town, and not to be confused with El-Ksar es-Seghir, the Little Fortress, a small fishing port between Tangier and Ceuta.

word to Queen Elizabeth that he hoped shortly to send her Stukeley as a present.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile, Abd el-Malek's condition had grown much worse. It had now been established that he was suffering from poison given him by the kaid of his Turkish troops. His doctors gave him only two days to live. His thoughts, however, were of his people for whom his premature death might have dread consequences. He believed, and he was probably right, that he alone had the power of holding together the great army he had assembled and that if he died before the invaders were destroyed there might be such crippling desertion to Mulai Mohammed, or even surrender to the Christians, that what appeared certain victory might become a disastrous defeat. With death so near delay was no longer possible. He therefore resolved to engage the enemy at the earliest opportunity.

He first sent for his brother Mulai Ahmed for whom he was said to have great affection although he was a little doubtful of his fighting qualities. He had recently had to complain of his neglect of duty as governor of Fez and of his failure to see that the troops at Larache were properly provisioned and ready for war. Although, he told him, he did not think him the least suited to so responsible a post, he would give him command of all the horse to "fight, conquer and die with them" because he was his brother, but at the least sign of cowardice he would strangle him with his own hands.

The strength of the shereefian army was so variously estimated that its size is very difficult to gauge. It probably numbered between sixty and seventy thousand men. It was made up of the standing army of nearly 30,000 horse and foot, a great number of levies called to the colours from all parts of the kingdom, and several thousand *Mudjahadin*, wild Arab tribesmen who had voluntarily joined the army in hope of plunder.

The standing army was made up of about 25,000 horse, armed with lance and sword, three thousand foot armed with the arquebus, and a thousand mounted arquebusiers. The cavalry were all natives of the country, mostly drawn from Berber

<sup>1</sup> *Calendar of State Papers, Spanish 1568-79*, p. 611.

tribes; the infantry were predominantly renegades; the mounted arquebusiers, who needed great skill to manage both horse and arquebus effectively, were made up of renegades and Turks, the latter being deserters or half-breeds, the backwash of the Ottoman invasion of the Maghreb.

The levies included three thousand Andalusian arquebusiers. These Andalusians were implacable enemies of the Christians by whom they and their fathers had been driven across the Straits into Africa. Some were from the mountains of Granada whence many had been expelled after the revolt of the Alpujarras. The loss of their traditional home in the fair land of Andalusia had intensified the hatred for Christians in which they had been bred. Born of generations of fighting men and engaged in a cause which they would have chosen above all others, these Andalusians, some mounted and some on foot, were regarded as the most important element of the Moorish army. Their leaders were Osian, a renegade from Ragusa, who commanded the horse, and Kaid ed-Degheli, who led the foot. There were also ten thousand horse and five thousand foot, cryptically described as "gathered together". These brought the total strength of the Shereef's army up to approximately 44,000, exclusive of the *Mudjahadin*. The artillery totalled thirty-four cannon.

The horde of Arab *Mudjahadin* were an embarrassment to the rest of the army. The Shereef, knowing that plunder was the sole purpose of their coming and that they were untrustworthy cowards, would have preferred them elsewhere. He was no less distrustful of a body of 3,000 horsemen whom he suspected of being secret adherents of the Black Sultan. These latter, however, were part of his regular forces and therefore a grave menace and very difficult to dismiss.

On the afternoon of Sunday, 3 August, the Shereef sent his Master of the Horse, Suleman, a renegade from Cordova, with some cavalry to locate the enemy and discover whether they were preparing to give battle. Suleman came upon the Portuguese just as their advance guard, as we have seen, had crossed the little Wad Warur. He saw them turn quickly back and recross it. The frightened Portuguese, as we know, were only seeking to place

the stream between themselves and the Moors, but Suleman believed they were withdrawing and reported that they were doing so. It was expected that the Shereef, in spite of his illness, would at once pursue the enemy, but he doubted the truth of the report and refused to move from the position he had taken up.

We have seen that what the Shereef dreaded was not the Portuguese, for whom by now he must have been feeling a good deal of contempt, but treachery in his own army. That which he most feared began now, on the eve of battle, to show itself. Mohammed Taba, the commander of the renegades, came with a story that 3,000 of the Moorish arquebusiers had neither powder nor shot for their weapons. It seems that their lack was of their own seeking as a convenient excuse for avoiding the hazards of battle and the retribution which would follow a possible defeat by the Black Sultan and his Christian allies. The Shereef ordered that any arquebusier who had not obtained from the Purveyor-General fifty balls and two pounds of powder by the next morning would be flogged.

How deep was the Shereef's concern about the danger of betrayal is shown by the step he took to prevent a further spread of treachery through the army. He mistrusted the leaders rather than their men. He therefore summoned the captains and gave to each a new command so that they found themselves suddenly placed at the head of men unknown to them. This may not have been the way to get the best out of his troops but it made betrayal by conspiracy between the leaders and the men very much more difficult. Machiavelli had ruled that no captain of a band should be elected from a district in which they lived for fear of his having too great an influence over his men.

Meanwhile the whole of the Portuguese main body had, as the Shereef expected, crossed the ford and were going into camp within a mile or so of the Moorish army. There were few hours of daylight left. The Christians planted Mulai Mohammed's standard in front of their camp as a signal and rallying point for his supporters in the enemy ranks, and a warning was issued against firing on deserters as they approached. It was to little purpose. The Black Sultan's brother, Mulai en-Naser, and two or three



renegades were all who came over. They included a Castilian, Kaid Marmi, and a Portuguese, Kaid Raposo. The latter, an unfrocked Franciscan of high birth, is said to have thrown himself at Sebastian's feet and given him detailed information about the Moorish army. Then darkness fell. Double sentries were posted, but no incident disturbed the uneasy rest of the two armies.

## *On the Plain of El-Ksar*

**I**T WAS DAWN on Monday, 4 August, 1578. Sebastian was holding his last council of war. Vital decisions had to be taken in the face of circumstances before which the stoutest hearts might have quailed.

The overwhelming strength of the enemy was no longer in doubt. Tens of thousands of Moorish horsemen ringed the horizon, silhouetted against the eastern sky of the awakening day. The noise of the enemy host preparing for battle—the tumult of their voices, the neighing of their stallions, the beating of their drums and the discordant notes of their horns and trumpets—filled the air. All that Sebastian could oppose to them was a dispirited army a quarter the size, “dying of hunger, thirst and heat, who, in great part, had left their arms behind to enable them to carry victuals on the march”;<sup>1</sup> they were broken in spirit, ill-provisioned, untrained and encumbered by many thousands of non-combatants. The main issue before the council was whether to hazard a battle or not.

When a fool perceives too late the desperate plight into which his rashness has led him and that there is no escape from the consequences of his folly, his confidence is apt to forsake him and he becomes a craven coward. On this August morning Sebastian could see for himself, and perhaps only for the first time understand, how great were the odds he had so rashly challenged.

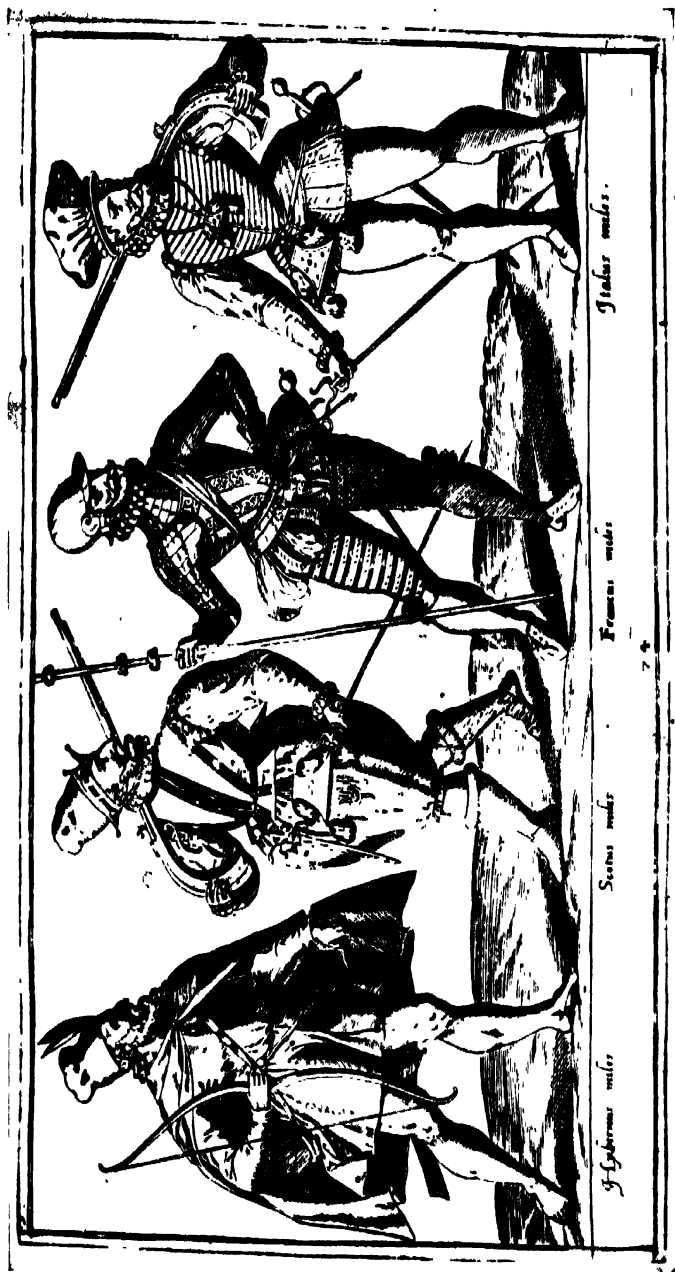
Near at hand there was no solace. Everyone at the King’s side realised that disaster was all but certain. Among them were the whimpering cowards on whom terror had begun to lay its paralysing grip. More difficult for the King to bear were the mute reproaches of those few brave and experienced officers whose wise

<sup>1</sup> *Calendar of State Papers, Rome 1572-78*, p. 491.



LARACHE

From O. Dapper's *Description de L'Afrique*, Amsterdam 1686



From *The Fugger News-Letters*: John Lane, The Bodley Head

# IRISH, SCOTTISH, FRENCH AND ITALIAN SOLDIERS

From an engraving in *Omnium Paene Gentium Imagines* by Abraham Bruyn (Cologne, 1577)

counsel he had consistently and so foolishly rejected. In such circumstances a poltroon would have broken down. He would have surrendered his command and bid others take over where he had so lamentably failed. Sebastian remained unmoved and resolute.

Whatever the King's faults, it is difficult to believe that now, at this crucial hour, an insane thirst for martial glory still blinded him to either the extreme peril into which he had led himself and his army, or the need for the most profound and solemn thought of how best to meet so desperate a situation. With a steady nerve and iron resolve there came a desire to be guided by the advice of those most experienced in war. He suddenly became less proud. He listened patiently and attentively to those whose advice at last he sought. Here at his last council, and after it, during the short hours of life which still remained to him, he displayed qualities which must have surprised those who knew him best, and in his use of them he redeemed much of the honour which he had forfeited by his past conduct. Surrounded by the drawn and anxious faces of his officers, he showed great moral, as well as physical, courage. Of the latter he had more than once provided ample proof—at Ceuta and before Arzila. He now showed himself no less capable of that cool resolve which is unshaken by extreme danger and unmoved by the fears of the less resolute.

In the circumstances it was natural that opinion on how best to meet the situation should have varied with the emotions of the leaders. Many had already lost heart on seeing the forces arrayed against them. There were those who pressed for refusal of battle and a precipitate retreat to the sea, to be followed perhaps by a fresh advance on Larache along the coast. Others counselled a parley.

Perhaps no heart beat fainter than that of Mulai Mohammed. But he had been bred to arms and knew that with the enemy so close a last minute withdrawal across the narrow ford would be impossible for a force the size of Sebastian's. Wiser than others, he proposed delaying battle until late in the day when the sun would be lower. This, he argued, would enable the Portuguese to fight

less at a disadvantage than in the noon heat and, in case of defeat, it might be possible to escape under cover of darkness. Among even those who took the gloomiest view there was no lack of men who were unwilling to face the dishonour of retreat. None scorned it more deeply than the King. The proposal of a parley was rejected as scarcely less discreditable and as likely to aggravate rather than better the situation. Even Mohammed's proposal to delay action, for which much was to be said and which, as events turned out, might have proved the wisest course, was unacceptable to the professional soldiers to whose advice the King in his extremity was at last ready to listen. The more experienced in war, the men who had most opposed the overland march—Aldana was prominent among them—urged the King to engage the enemy at the earliest possible moment as the only alternative to withdrawal and certain disaster. Immediate action might precipitate a battle before the Shereef was ready and an advantage thus be gained. The proposal commended itself to the King's impetuous nature and was adopted.

While the council was sitting the artillery and transport, which had been left overnight on the right bank of the Mekhazen, were brought across the river. The Moors, who were watching every movement in the Christian camp, counted the cannon as they were slowly and painfully hauled through the ford.

Before the council broke up the order of battle had been decided upon. Full weight had been given to the advice of the more experienced soldiers. The final decisions accorded with the best military practice of the day and the measures taken were probably as good as could have been devised, with the forces and material available, to meet a situation unforeseen by any of the leaders in the atmosphere of optimism which had hedged the King's preparations in Lisbon.

Outside Africa there was much contemporary criticism of the composition of the expedition. Sebastian was especially blamed for going to war in Africa with so few cavalry and with a preponderance of pikemen instead of 'shot'. He had been dissuaded in Lisbon from taking heavy cavalry which were only useful in breaking the stubborn resistance of unflinching infantry; in

Africa they would be matched against the light horse of the Moors whose superior mobility would give them the advantage over their opponents.

Critics forgot that the official, and indeed primary, objective of the expedition was the capture of Larache, an operation in which cavalry would be of little use. The need was for artillery, pioneers and assault troops which rightly constituted the greater part of the army. Where the King had blundered was not in his choice of arms but in electing to adventure inland and risk a general engagement for which he was not equipped.

Sebastian's army was much weaker in arquebusiers than the enemy. The shortage of fire-arms may have been due partly to financial stringency. The arquebus was still an expensive weapon and not easily replaced. The pike, on the contrary, was cheap and in abundant supply. But there was much to be said for going to war against an enemy whose strength lay mostly in cavalry with a force in which pikemen preponderated. It was the effectiveness of the pike against cavalry that had made it the most popular weapon in Europe. If pikemen did not flinch they could resist repeated cavalry charges as the famous Swiss phalanx, and their imitators the German *landsknechts*, had often demonstrated. Unfortunately not all of Sebastian's men were staunch. But it was no new thing for pikemen to be used against the Moors. In 1564 Philip had recruited *landsnecht* pikemen in Germany for his attack on El-Ksar es-Seghir.

Arquebusiers, on the other hand, were very vulnerable to charging cavalry owing to the slowness of reloading. Even when they were drawn up in several ranks, firing in succession and retiring to the rear to reload, they were incapable of stopping by their fire a cavalry charge pressed home with determination. The pike therefore was still not only a very effective but an essential weapon against cavalry. Against a mixed force of cavalry and arquebusiers it was necessary to combine pike and arquebus. The Shereef was known to have arquebusiers as well as cavalry and Sebastian had rightly combined pikes and arquebuses in his expeditionary force. These were the considerations which guided the council in the use of the troops they had at their disposal.

The medieval system of dividing an army into three parts, vaward, main-battle and rearward, still persisted. The customary array was deployment with the vaward and rearward, or the wings as they now were called, on the right and left respectively of the main-battle, with flanking bodies of light horse, such as Sebastian had in his mounted *fronteiros* and Mohammed's horse, for reconnaissance and pursuit.

To have used the customary deployed array against so great a body of cavalry as now confronted the Portuguese on a field so favourable to the horse would have been disastrous. The enemy would have pierced the line and rolled it up from the flanks. It had therefore been wisely decided at the council to employ an array which has often been used in Africa within living memory and which in the late sixteenth century was sometimes used by small bodies of pikemen against cavalry. This was the hollow square or, to use a modern military term, the box of all round defence.

When the leaders left Sebastian's last council they rode off to array the army accordingly. The post of honour, the centre of the three regiments forming the advance-guard, was assigned to the pick of the Portuguese formations, the 2,500 *Aventuros*, commanded by Alvaro Pires de Tavora, brother of Christovão de Tavora. In the coming battle they were to demonstrate that Portuguese manhood was still worthy of the great traditions of the previous century. To the *Aventuros*, as centre of the advance-guard, fell the honour of opening the engagement in the face of artillery fire and of hurling back frontal counter-attacks.

On the right of the *Aventuros* was the regiment of Germans and Walloons, three thousand strong, under Martin of Burgundy. They, too, were to acquit themselves with the distinction expected of troops who had seen much hard fighting in the Low Countries. The letter which Aldana had brought to Sebastian from Alva had advised him to place arquebusiers on his flanks. Accordingly with the Germans there were some arquebusiers under Hercule de Pisa, Stukeley's second-in-command. On the left of the *Aventuros* was a composite regiment of two thousand Castilians under Alfonso de Aguilar and the six hundred papal



troops under Stukeley himself. There was also on this flank a detachment of arquebusiers under Luiz de Godojj.

Drawn up behind the flank regiments of the advance-guard, and forming the two sides of the square, were two regiments of Portuguese infantry. These were the impressed men, unwilling conscripts of the lowest order who knew neither how to handle their arms nor how to defend themselves. The rigours of the march had shattered what little spirit may have remained to them when they first landed. The regiment on the right was commanded by Vasco de Silveira and that on the left by Diego Lopez de Sequeira. Between the two was the great hollow of the square which must have covered several acres. In it were the frightened crowds of non-combatants—transport drivers, serving men, slaves, priests and women—mingled with wagons and coaches and thousands of transport animals. In the wagons were the reserves of military stores and the impedimenta of the King, nobles and fidalgos.

The fourth side of the square, the rearward, was composed of three regiments. The centre one was made up of two battalions of arquebusiers. On their right was a Portuguese regiment under Francisco de Tavora and on their left another under Miguel de Norohna. These two flank regiments of the rearward and possibly also the third one in the centre, were largely made up of *Aventuros* whose lack of military experience, like that of their especially honoured comrades in the advance-guard, was in part compensated for by some knowledge of the use of arms and by noble traditions which they were anxious to defend. The rear-guard, like the advance-guard, was flanked with wings of 'shot'.

Sebastian strengthened his position by adopting a military device which Europe had learnt early in the previous century from the rebel Hussites of Bohemia. Finding themselves, like Sebastian, matched against an enemy greatly superior in cavalry, the Hussites had found it of great advantage to fight from within a bulwark or *laager* of wagons. Sebastian did not surround himself, as the Hussites had done, with baggage wagons but he placed a line of them, garnished with arquebusiers, on either side of the square as a lateral protection against charging cavalry. The effect

of this was to leave open to direct attack only the advance- and rear-guards whilst giving extra protection on the flanks where it was most needed. That was probably why the worst troops had been assigned to the flanks or sides of the square.

Further out on the flanks, beyond the protecting wagons, was the cavalry, divided into two regiments of perhaps a thousand each. The best of these squadrons were the leading ones on the right who were the mounted *fronteiros* of the Tangier garrison, the commander of which, Duarte de Meneses, was at their head. Behind him were other squadrons commanded by the Duke d'Aveiro. Still further out on this flank was Mulai Mohammed with his 250 cavalry and two hundred mounted arquebusiers. The cavalry of the left flank appear to have been directly under the King, but he was so little with them during the battle that they must have had their own commander though his name has not survived. Sebastian was afterwards criticised for not having adopted an array which would have given greater scope and more manoeuvring room to his cavalry. But so weak was he in this arm in comparison with the enemy that it seems improbable that he could in any case have turned them to much account. The array he chose was unquestionably the best.

The artillery, which had originally totalled thirty-six cannon, had abandoned many guns on the road—some said as many as thirty. It was drawn up, according to current practice, in front of the advance-guard and commanded by Pedro de Mesquita. At this date artillery was still a primitive weapon, elementary in design, immobile, slow to load and difficult to lay. As a field weapon its value lay rather in its moral effect than in its power to inflict physical hurt. Its main purpose, therefore, was to shake the advancing enemy and break the impact of the initial assault with its first salvo. For this reason cannon were usually placed in front of an army.

Such were the array and dispositions of the Christian army, devised with forethought and skill. Unfortunately, less consideration had been given to the tactical situation. The open rolling plain was not the only topographical circumstance favourable to an enemy preponderantly strong in cavalry. The Christians were

just where the Shereef had intended them to be, in the cramped angle of two rivers. On their right was the unfordable Lixus, at their rear the Mekhazen, fordable at a very narrow crossing and then only when the tide was out. Sebastian had fallen into the blunder which Cardona had made at Ravenna, in 1512, when he fought with a river at his back and no line of retreat. Ravenna became in consequence one of the bloodiest battles in history. But there was a much more recent reminder of the peril of such a position. Among Sebastian's regiment of so-called Germans there must have been some who only ten years previously had seen Louis of Nassau suffer disaster at Jemningen through placing his army in a similar *cul-de-sac*, with a river at his rear and no ford or bridge. The lessons of Ravenna and Jemningen had been forgotten.

To the grave tactical disadvantage of the Portuguese position was added the not inconsiderable handicap of the main-battle having to fight facing the sun. As we have seen, the wearing of armour in the fierce African heat was almost insupportable and therefore a very serious hindrance to fighting men. Had the sun been at the backs of the all-important advance guard the torment would have been less unbearable and they would have been spared the additional embarrassment of being dazzled by blinding rays. No circumstances required to place the Christians at a disadvantage appeared to be lacking.

The various contemporary chroniclers give us no hint of the depth of the ranks forming the four sides of the Portuguese square. There may have been only three or four ranks but there were probably not less than five, and there may have been twice as many. It is not possible therefore to gauge how great an area the army covered, but it might have been as much as half a mile across. Although the square was barely manoeuvrable it was, as we shall see, capable of forward movement. The cannon and transport therefore cannot at the start have been out-spanned.

Meanwhile the Shereef, in spite of the very critical state of his health, had also been drawing up his army for the coming battle. His 8,000 infantry were in crescent formation in three long ranks, with large bodies of cavalry on either flank. This accorded with

the general custom of eastern armies who favoured a horn-shaped attack intended to outflank and envelope the enemy before the frontal assault began. It was very popular with the Persians and with the Turks from whom the Shereef had learnt it.

The front rank of the infantry was composed of the three thousand Andalusians under Ed Deghali. The renegades, under Mohammed Taba, were in the middle rank. Behind them were the five thousand local troops of Moorish and Arab blood, the *Guezoula* and *Zouaoua* or *Zouaves*, undisciplined tribesmen who made unreliable soldiers.

At each horn of this immense crescent was a body of five thousand cavalry, the *Espauis* or *Spahis*, as the Turks called them. The rest of the Moorish cavalry, possibly as much as twenty-five thousand strong and commanded by the Shereef's brother, Mulai Ahmed, were drawn up in separate bodies in rear of the infantry, ready to gallop out to either flank and encircle the numerically inferior Christian army. Noticeable among them were the Lamt, nomads from the Sahara, carrying great shields of the coveted hide of the addax gazelle of the desert. The cavalry were armed with scimitars, except for Osian's thousand mounted arquebusiers who were divided into two bodies, one at each horn of the crescent. The thirty-four cannon forming the Moorish artillery train were, like Sebastian's, drawn up in front of the army, but on slightly rising ground and camouflaged with branches.

The Moorish army's dependence upon European blood, both in the ranks and among the leaders, was very considerable. Their best troops were the Andalusians who, although of the same Arab-Berber stock as the Moors, had been invigorated, both morally and physically, by centuries of residence in the bracing climate of Spain and by inter-marriage with Europeans. After the Andalusians the staunchest fighting men were the renegades who were of predominantly European blood. These two most important elements of the army, the Andalusians and the renegades, were both commanded by renegades. Osian, the Andalusian commander, was an Italian and many of the Shereef's mounted arquebusiers were renegade Christians. Suleman, a renegade from Cordova, was the Shereef's master of the horse. The Moorish

artillery, like the Turkish at this time, was almost certainly served by renegade gunners.

When all the shereefian troops had assembled at their appointed stations the distant sound of the royal drums and trumpets began to reach their ears, heralding the arrival of the Shereef himself. Except for the few brief minutes some days earlier when he had climbed painfully into the saddle to welcome his brother, Abd el-Malek had not mounted a horse for nearly three weeks and all that time he had scarcely been seen by his troops. According to his Jewish doctor's narrative, the Shereef's condition had that morning shown considerable improvement. "The King rose from his bed very well", he wrote, "and before it was daylight asked for his breakfast, and drank a *granado* and three yolks of new-laid eggs. Muley Hamet (Ahmed) came to speak with him concerning the business of the battle, and took his leave very pleasant. At 10 o'clock the King called for his dinner, and we gave him a roast pullet and another sodden, with a little 'blanck mangie', and he ate a little of everything and at the beginning of his dinner drank some 'synomond' water. After dinner he had tidings that the Portugals were beginning to march; and he called for his raiment and apparelled himself in cloth of gold, and wrapped upon his head his 'tora' and set on it his 'bruche' with three precious stones and his feather; took his sword also which was very rich, and was sent him from Turkey, and his dagger of the same work garnished with precious stones, turquies and rubies; finally he arrayed himself even as if it were Easterday, with great rings on his fingers full of precious stones, and went a-horseback against my will. And so we came to the camp and found our soldiers in order and the Christians were marching towards us as much as they could."<sup>1</sup>

Abd el-Malek rode slowly on to the field, mounted on a magnificent charger, preceded by drummers and followed by trumpeters, all riding gaily caparisoned stallions. Over his head was borne the umbrella of crimson and gold, a symbol of royalty borrowed, like the rest of the pageantry surrounding him, from the Turks. It was carried by a *peik* wearing his customary splendid yellow head-dress with an aigrette of ostrich feathers. In front of

<sup>1</sup> *Calendar of State Papers, Foreign* 1578-79, p. 166.

the Shereef rode five standard bearers each carrying the sacred green banner of Islam. His viziers and European advisers accompanied him. He was surrounded by scores of court officials and a host of personal retainers on foot, all richly appalled in their finest robes or the royal livery. Behind could be seen the nodding plumes of the escort of *peiks* and *solaks*. Then came the royal bodyguard of two hundred *beleberdouch* with their gay head-dresses and gilded halberds, commanded by Kaid Musa. If the royal standard bearers were not already on parade with the army they were with the Shereef, carrying the sacred flags of the great saints of the Maghreb el-Acsa which the Moors customarily carried with them into battle. Of every colour and shade, some fashioned in silk, others in velvet, embroidered in gold or of gold brocade, they were in great numbers and lent an air of gaiety and splendour to the army of robed horsemen.

To many of the thousands of troops on parade the pageantry and the music were familiar enough. But to-day the whole army was stirred as the sound of drums and trumpets came drifting down the ranks announcing that the Shereef, in spite of his illness, would himself take command.

It was only when he drew near that men began to realise the true poignancy of the scene. They beheld the ashen face of a dying man. His arms were almost paralysed and it was apparent that those about him feared lest he might at any moment fall from the saddle. All attempts to arrest the effects of the poison had failed. The Shereef knew that his doctors had despaired of his recovery, or indeed of his survival for more than perhaps a few hours. Nevertheless he had dragged his aching body from the litter and had had himself lifted on to his horse and strapped to the saddle, at what agony he alone knew. But he also knew that on this day, on the issue of which the fate of his kingdom depended, his people's need for their ruler had never been greater. He alone had the power to hold together the army against the foreign invaders and their puppet sultan.

He rode slowly up and down the ranks and, raising his voice as much as his ebbing strength allowed, he assured his troops that victory was certain. He exhorted them to fight resolutely against

the infidel invaders, and promised special privileges and rich rewards to all who should distinguish themselves in the coming battle. The supreme courage and self-sacrifice of the Shereef, rather than his brave words, fired the troops with fervour and loyalty, and moved even those who had come on to the field with thoughts only of plunder.

Having concluded his inspection, the Shereef, accompanied by his *entourage* of viziers and court officials and surrounded by his escort and bodyguard, took up his position behind the infantry and in front of the great mass of cavalry in the rear. He then summoned the principal commanders of his army to whom he made a brief speech. He again assured them of his confidence in a great victory over the Christians, but he added a warning of the dire consequences which awaited anyone among them who should fail in his duty. His speech was cut short by their acclamations and their demands to be led straightway into battle.

A little way off King Sebastian was also taking the field, riding in his magnificent coach and wearing a chased and richly damascened helmet, a new suit of armour and over it the gorgeous silk tabard of St. Louis. At his side was the sword of Alfonso Henriques, the maker of Portugal, which he had borrowed from the convent of Santa Cruz at Coimbra.

Behind him came the royal standard of the house of Aviz. Accompanying him were the great lords of Portugal, many in armour so splendid that it appeared to belong more properly to the tiltyard than the field of battle. Notable among them were the Duke d'Aviero, who rode in the royal coach, Don Antonio, the young Count of Vimioso and the boy Duke of Barcellos riding in his own gilt coach. Close to the King was the Spanish ambassador, Juan de Silva, and the Papal Nuncio, Alexander Formento. Behind them came the rest of the nobles and the *fidalgos*, among whom were many aristocratic youths whose parents in an evil hour had sent them out on what they had hoped would be an adventure as rich in glory as it would be free from serious risk. The mounted *fronteiros* of the Tangier garrison provided the royal escort and completed a picture of great but untimely splendour.

A near observer might have suspected that behind the closed visors were drawn and anxious faces. It was plain that many of the riders could hardly hold themselves erect in the saddle from fatigue and from the pain of armour already grown unbearably hot from the sun which was now high above the horizon. The King had had water poured between his armour and his body to cool the burning steel.

Sebastian then addressed his army, exhorting them to take courage and cheerfully face death for the love of God and the Holy Faith. He promised special favours to all who should distinguish themselves by their courage. With an eye, one suspects, on the foreign mercenaries whom every general expected to melt away on the eve of battle, he added a caution that the country would offer no refuge to fugitives and the enemy show no mercy. He concluded with an assurance that divine grace would make victory certain.

When the King had finished his speech the Bishops of Coimbra and Oporto and the Apostolic Delegate, in their magnificent vestments, with great crucifixes borne aloft and attended by their chaplains and acolytes, blessed the troops and in their turn exhorted them to have courage and readily to offer up their lives in defence of the Faith. The sonorous utterances of the great dignitaries of the Church were followed by the humbler and more personal appeals of the hundreds of priests. The clergy then withdrew and joined the rest of the non-combatants in the hollow of the square.

The array of the army and the concluding ceremonies had taken much time. It wanted but an hour to noon when they were complete. At the hottest time of day at the hottest time of year Sebastian ordered his army to advance.



## The Battle

WHEN THE SHEREEF saw the Portuguese army drawing near he ordered the cavalry at the horns of the crescent to extend and advance; at the same time he ordered some of the great mass of cavalry in his rear to gallop out and complete the encirclement of the invaders. These manoeuvres were successfully accomplished so that before the battle had even opened Sebastian found his army surrounded and the apprehensions of his troops intensified.

The Moorish artillery then opened fire. This brought the Portuguese to a halt. The physical damage was of course not serious, but the moral effect on an army of which only a small part had ever seen a shot fired was very considerable. According to a prejudiced observer the terrified Christians took cover by flinging themselves on their faces. A more probable story is that when the Moorish guns opened fire a Jesuit priest raised a great crucifix above the heads of the infantry who immediately sank to their knees in prayer.

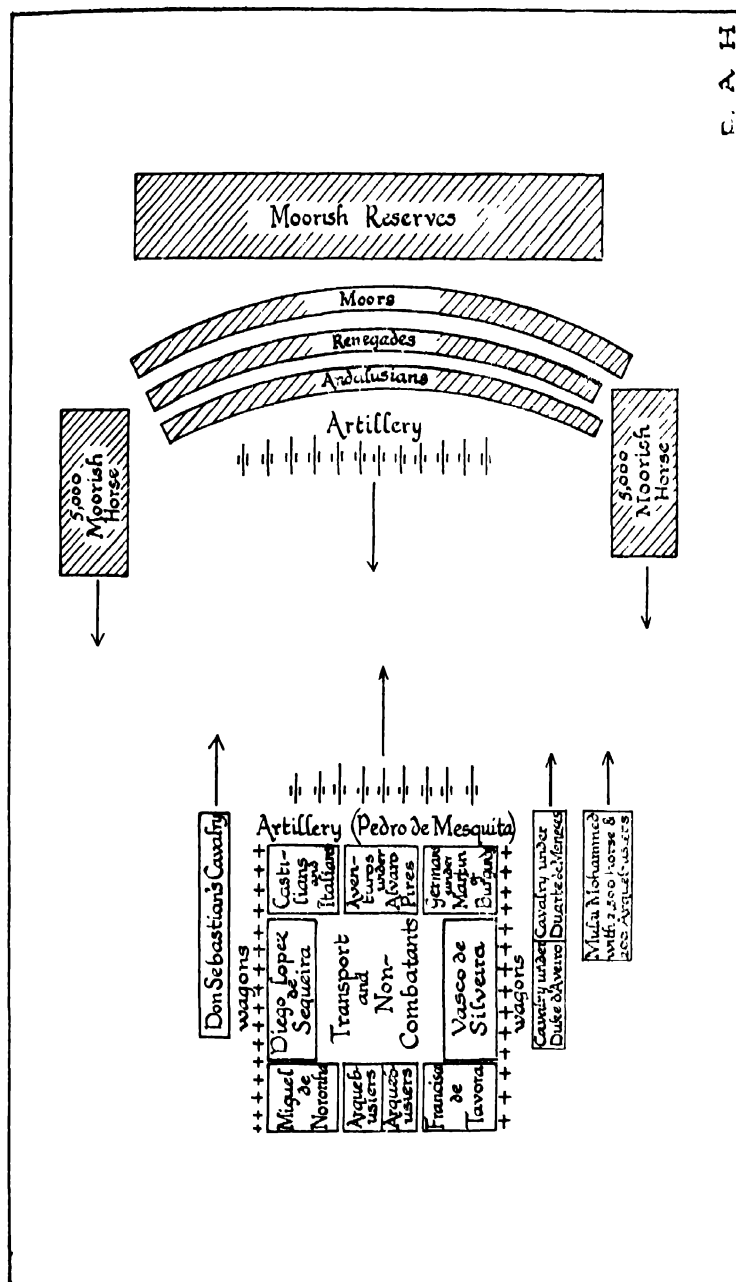
The Portuguese cannon replied to the enemy's fire but the salvo had little effect. Owing to the reloading of cannon being so slow there was always a danger of the enemy rushing the guns immediately the first salvo had been fired. To prevent this happening both armies at once moved forward and found themselves close enough for a general engagement.

Sebastian and d'Aviero now left the royal coach and mounted their war horses. The Duke placed himself at the head of the cavalry of the right wing. The King, accompanied by Viniioso, rode forward with his escort and ordered the advance to be resumed. The leading regiments, *Aventuros*, Germans and Castilians, eagerly responding, engaged the opposing infantry with

resolution and great courage. The battle cries of the two armies now filled the air, the "Bismillah" of the Moslems answering the "Aviz e Christo" of the *Aventuros* and the "Santiago y cierra España" of the Castilians. In this first clash the Christian pikemen suffered heavily for they could not reach the enemy before the latter discharged their arquebuses at them. But the slowness of re-loading gave the Christians an opportunity to close with their opponents and this they quickly did. The fighting was now hand-to-hand, Christian pike against Moslem arquebus and scimitar, and the advantage lay with the pike. The ferocity with which the *Aventuros* in particular hurled themselves upon the Andalusians first brought the Moors to a standstill and then broke their centre. Under the weight of this assault the Andalusians, the flower of the shereefian army, gave way and many of them fled.

The initial advantage of the Christians was short-lived. Their square was simultaneously attacked on all sides. The rear-guard regiments under Francisco de Tavora and Miguel de Norohna were hard pressed by repeated cavalry charges. Some of the enemy horse got round or through the line of wagons on the Christian left and attacked the miserable Portuguese conscripts under Diego Lopez de Sequeira. In the van the Moorish renegades, who had moved up to reinforce or replace the broken Andalusians, fell upon the *Aventuros* the vigour of whose dashing advance had now spent itself, and hurled them back. The latter, greatly outnumbered, had to give so much ground that they soon found themselves behind their own artillery which was quickly captured by the enemy. Pedro de Mesquita, the artillery commander, was shot dead.

The two flanking regiments of the Christian van, the Germans on the right and the Castilians and Italians on the left, seeing the *Aventuros* give way, counter-attacked and succeeded in forcing back the renegades. The Shereef now began to turn to account his great advantage of almost unlimited reserves. Cavalry were ordered to go to the relief of the renegades who then succeeded in holding up the Christians. But although the three regiments of the Christian van were thus brought to a halt they held their ground valiantly and refused to yield to the greatly superior



E. A. H.

THE BATTLE OF ALCAZAR, 4 AUGUST 1578

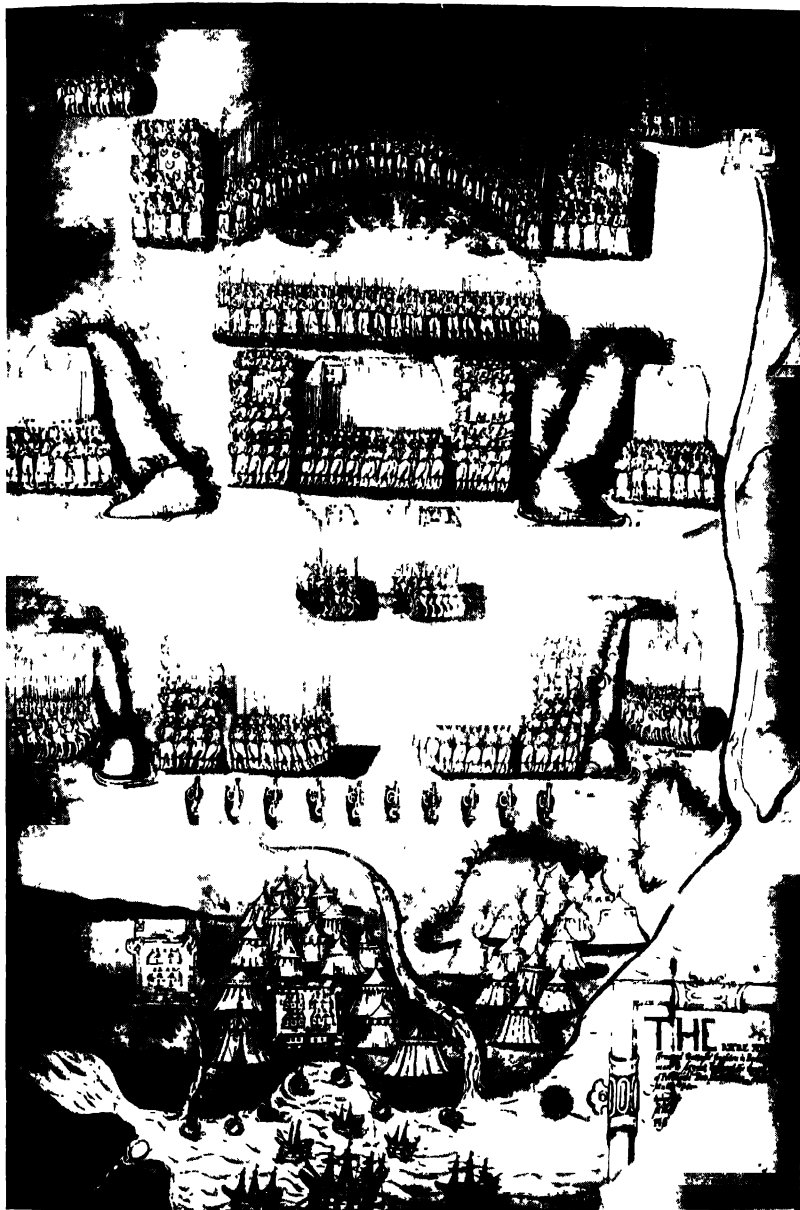
numbers of horse and foot by whom they were being assailed.

Both flanks of the Christian square had by now become engaged and were proving incapable of serious resistance to the enemy horsemen. In a very short while such terror spread through the broken conscript ranks that many flung down their arms and cried for mercy on bended knees, only to have their skulls cleft by Moorish scimitars. Others turned and fled into the open centre of the square, vainly hoping to find safety among the thousands of terrified non-combatants on to whom the rear-guard and the flanks were shrinking under the weight of the assault. This added greatly to the confusion and turmoil and to the increasing difficulty of supplying powder and arms to the fighting line. Only the van held its ground.

So far the Christian cavalry had not played a very active part in the battle. But the Duke d'Aviero, who was on the right, now perceived that if the forward regiments were to continue to stand fast a counter-attack must be delivered against their assailants. He placed himself at the head of Duarte de Meneses' squadrons of *fronteiros* as well as of his own and, supported by Mulai Mohammed and his Moorish horse, he led this considerable body of cavalry in an assault on the left flank of the opposing infantry. The enemy horse, who were protecting this flank, were driven off the field and the infantry behind them crumpled under the weight of the unexpected onslaught.

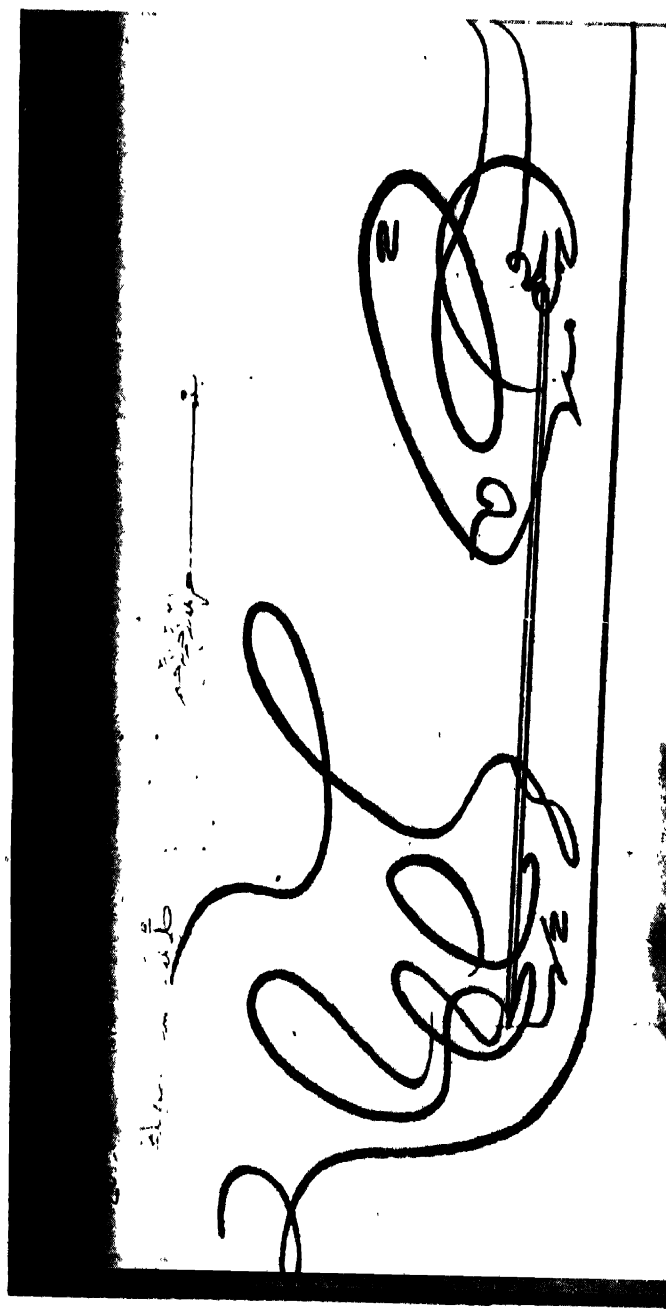
The resolution with which d'Aviero pressed home his attack carried him into the very heart of the enemy's main body where two of the Shereef's five green standards fell into his hands. Many of the fugitive Moorish horsemen never rejoined and some of the more terrified did not draw rein, it was said, until they reached Fez, nearly eighty miles away.

The Moors were now placed in a very critical situation. "Believe me", wrote the Jewish doctor, "we thought to lose all." But the impetuosity of the Christians repaired the damage they had done. Regardless of another large body of enemy squadrons on his right, d'Aviero, like other more famous cavalry leaders, unwisely allowed his men to pursue the flying horsemen off the field. His intention had been to reform, wheel to the right, and



*By courtesy of the Marquis of Salisbury*

THE BATTLE OF EL-KSAR EL-KEBIR  
From the original at Hatfield House



*From the origin the Public Record Office*

MULAI AHMED'S SIGNATURE TO A LETTER TO QUEEN ELIZABETH  
DATED THE 23 JUNE 1590  
The signature is in gold leaf and measures eleven inches by five inches

charge the enemy on his flank. In the excitement of the pursuit his squadrons became too scattered to recover the formation they had lost with the result that these fresh enemy horsemen were upon them before they could rally. The few men of d'Aviero's squadrons to escape encirclement galloped back to their main body, but were so hard pressed that they were driven into the ranks of the German infantry. Their pursuers did not stop there. They, too, broke into the German ranks, chiefly in pursuit of their fellow countrymen, Mulai Mohammed's men, who had tried to conceal themselves in the Christian square. Consequently the Germans, some of the staunchest troops in Sebastian's army but already exhausted by continuous engagement with superior forces, were thrown into great confusion.

Sebastian was showing dauntless courage which in the heat of battle developed into the blind fury of the fanatic. He sought victory not by his own generalship, which he certainly had every reason to mistrust, but by striving to inspire his troops to super-human efforts by his readiness to hazard his own life. Early in the fighting he had left his post with the cavalry on the left and joined the battered infantry of the advance-guard. When they were thrown back by the weight of the renegade counter-attack he hurled himself into the *mêlée*. There he remained, fighting desperately. His horse was killed under him but he quickly mounted another. A slight wound in the right arm was no check to his ardour. Indeed, we may be sure that he gloried in the spilling of his royal blood.

Meanwhile the cavalry on the left had also become engaged. Like the squadrons on the right, they gained an initial advantage over the enemy's opposing flank but the final outcome was equally unfortunate. The tide was again turned by the powerful reserves of horsemen which the Moors now threw into the battle. For the second time that day the Christian squadrons, untrained and undisciplined, failed to reform in time for the enemy's counter-attack by which they were routed. A few managed to make good their escape from the field. Of these some were cut down by their own leaders in a desperate attempt to arrest the panic which their desertion was causing. Those who scorned

flight, or for whom escape was impossible, were hurled back on to the Castilians and Italians, many of whom, like the Germans on the other flank, were trampled under the hooves of their own cavalry.

In spite of having both their flanks crushed, the Christian van continued to fight with great gallantry. But their situation was desperate. The rest of the army was crumbling and there were no reserves to fill the gaps in their ranks or to give them respite from continuous fighting. Since the battle had opened there had been no opportunity to disengage. Consequently, under the heavy strain of continuous hand-to-hand fighting in intense heat, their strength began to ebb and their resistance to flag. The Castilians and Italians, many of whom had lost their pikes, alone claimed to have killed two thousand Moors with their daggers, but no matter how many of the enemy they slew the pressure of superior numbers never relaxed.

The enemy had seemingly inexhaustible reserves with which to reform broken ranks and to give rest to those of their troops who needed it, so that neither casualties nor exhaustion affected the weight of the pressure on the Christians. The resistance of the latter was also weakened by the international jealousies which divided them. In the heat of the bloody battle in which every man's life was in dire peril there was little interest in the fortunes of near-by foreigners or inclination for mutual aid. Each nation, whether Portuguese, Castilian, German or Italian, recognising that it had to rely for survival wholly on its own efforts, fought with a keen sense of the need for unity within its own ranks but not beyond them. Although the German regiment was far from homogeneous it was almost wholly composed of seasoned mercenaries who understood better than any the need for cohesion. It was they who offered the stoutest resistance, but for them, as for the others, there were neither reserves nor support from neighbours to save them from the defeat which constant attrition was bringing upon them.

The course of the battle left little doubt regarding its final result. Nevertheless, an event had occurred in the Moorish lines which might have had disastrous consequences for the shereefian



army. When, early in the battle, the Sherceef saw the squadrons on his left pursued off the field by d'Aviero and de Meneses he became greatly alarmed. In spite of his agony and weakness he struggled from his litter into the saddle in an endeavour to stay and rally the remaining squadrons on that flank. They were wavering and likely at any moment to follow the example of those who had already fled from the field.

Seeing the victorious Christian horsemen drawing rapidly nearer, he rode into the press of battle and, hoping to make his men turn and face the enemy, he endeavoured to place himself at their head. His companions, seeing his intention and aware of his critical condition, rushed to restrain him. Some seized the bridle of his horse, some his stirrup leathers and others his robes. All implored him to spare himself. But the sick man was determined that, at no matter what cost, he would rally his men himself. Enraged at the efforts to stop him, he painfully raised his sword to drive away those seeking to restrain him. The paroxysm of fury and the physical effort were too much for the failing man. Seized with violent pain, he fainted and would have fallen from his horse had he not been supported by those about him. After they had laid him in his litter he recovered consciousness but only for a little while. Within half an hour he was dead.

The Sherceef was aged thirty-five when he met his heroic death. In a reign of little over two years he had shown himself to have qualities which were sadly lacking in the history of Moorish rulers and which his people could ill afford to lose.

A story was current that before he died he had told those about him that his death must be kept secret until the battle was over. The need for this was probably no less apparent to the viziers who were with him, than to the dying man. Internecine strife was traditional among the diverse and mutually hostile elements of the population. Bitter hatred divided Berbers and Arabs. The only safeguard against civil war was a ruler strong enough to inspire the turbulent factions in the kingdom with fear of the consequence of rebellion. Even in the far better disciplined Ottoman dominions the death of a sultan was often followed by a period of pillage and general license by the Janissaries who

did not return to their customary discipline until the new ruler had made the strength of his arm felt. In Morocco, where the central authority was a great deal weaker, the death of a sultan was usually the beginning of a period of turmoil which lasted until his successor had time to establish control over the country. The length of the interval depended upon the strength of the opposition and of the claims of aspirants to the sultanate whose subversive activities continued until they were seized and put to death.

The circumstances of Abd el-Malek's death were accompanied by much graver risks. The immense army which he had assembled and which was now, at the moment of his death, at grips with the invaders had been largely obtained by compulsion. Few among those many thousands of horsemen had come to fight out of love for their country or for their Shereef. It was fear of the consequences of disobeying a royal command which had brought most of them there, and had they heard of the Shereef's death a great number would have deserted to the homes they had so reluctantly left. News of his death would have provided an opportunity to pay off old scores such as few would have liked to miss, and tribe would have turned on tribe. Moreover, at the least sign of disaffection the secret adherents of the Black Sultan would unquestionably have gone over to the invaders. Many others might have followed, for in the political situation there was much to perplex them regarding where their duty lay. Whereas the Shereef, whose Christian sympathies were as well known to his own people as they were to half Europe, was now leading them against a Christian army, Mulai Mohammed, an implacable hater of infidels, was ranged against them on the Christian side.

In all these circumstances, had the Shereef's death become known, his army would very probably have vanished like chaff in a gale and the Christians have become the surprised masters of the field. These risks were very apparent to the viziers and renegade courtiers who were with the Shereef when he died.

It was only twelve years since Suleiman the Magnificent had also died in battle at a moment when it was important that his army should not be discouraged, but in circumstances which

were not nearly so critical as at Abd el-Malek's death. Nevertheless the Turkish Grand Vizier had decided that it was necessary to conceal the grim truth. Edicts had continued to issue from the royal tent and later the corpse had been carried in a closed litter, the attendants pretending to keep up communication with the occupant. The silence of the Sultan's personal physician had been secured by strangling him.

Bearing in mind how much the Shercef had been influenced by the Turks and his familiarity with their ways, it seems probable that, knowing he might die before the battle was over, he had ordered that his death should be concealed and the precedent established at Suleiman's death closely followed. The parallel, indeed, was close. His body was placed in a litter and his Jewish physician, instead of being strangled, pretended to be keeping up a conversation with his master through the closed curtains.<sup>1</sup>

How necessary these precautions were was clearly shown when a rumour of the Shercef's death reached the ranks of the renegades. In spite of what by then must have appeared an almost certain victory, so convinced were they that the tide of battle would now be turned that some of them gave themselves up to the Portuguese crying, "The Shercef is dead!" The Christians were too worn out to heed them.

Meanwhile the battle was still raging, but increasingly in favour of the Moors who were using their mounted arquebusiers to great advantage. The method of attack appears to have been what later, when the pistoleer had succeeded the mounted arquebusier, was called the *caracole*, in which each successive line of horsemen fired into the enemy and then wheeled to the rear to reload. The Portuguese were subjected to continuous fire from the thousand mounted arquebusiers and, being chiefly armed with pike and dagger and therefore unable to strike back effectively, they suffered severe punishment. But they fought on.

<sup>1</sup> Consideration for the political insecurity following a sultan's death led to a similar concealment of the death of another Moorish sultan in 1894 when Mulai el-Hassan's rotting corpse was borne grimly homeward in a closed litter with strict observance of all the ceremonies of a royal progress (W. B. Harris, *Taflelt*, London 1895, p. 347).

Accounts of the battle do little to help us picture the shape of the Portuguese square at this stage. It was certainly occupying a very reduced area for much ground had been given everywhere. But the advance-guard was not the only part of the square which was still offering stubborn resistance to the Moors. The *Aventuros* in the rear, under Francisco de Tavora, were still fighting resolutely. The sides of the square had been broken, but as the army was apparently still offering a continuous front the flanks of the advance- and rear-guards had evidently been thrown far back so as to join each other, giving the former square a roughly circular form.

The King continued to display fanatical courage, galloping from one part of the field to another, always seeking to be where danger was greatest and encouraging his men with brave words and braver deeds. Three horses had been killed under him, his standard-bearer was dead and his standard lost. Casualties had reduced his escort to seven or eight *fronteiros*. He was ever in the *mêlée* and killing with his own sword, men afterwards said, as many Moors as any man in the army.

News was brought him that the gallant Francisco de Tavora had been shot dead and that the rear-guard was breaking. Collecting five hundred men he hurried back to give what help he could. He was too late and had too few men to restore the situation. When the much reduced rear-guard had seen their leader fall they had panicked and by the time the King arrived they were throwing down their arms, some crying for mercy, others running away.

We next hear of the King leading a third and, owing to lack of support, a not very effective cavalry charge in the van. But the gallant regiments of the advance-guard were almost overcome. The Castilians and Italians had already been overwhelmed and their resistance ended. Shattered remnants of the *Aventuros* and the Germans were still standing and fighting back, but with failing strength.

Although most of the Christian cavalry had also succumbed, d'Aviero and Aldana were still there. They and the Spanish ambassador, Juan de Silva, had managed to rally and hold together a small body of horse with which they were repeatedly

charging the enemy wherever there seemed best hope of doing good. They had lost sight of Sebastian. Some survivors of his body-guard and of the nobles attached to his person sought him vainly. When last seen he had had with him some personal retainers and a single renegade, probably a deserter from the Moorish army.

Mulai Mohammed had also disappeared. After the rout of the cavalry of the right wing he and some of his men had contrived to slip through the Moorish horsemen. They endeavoured to escape across the Mekhazen by the ford which the whole Portuguese army had passed over not many hours before. But the tide was up and a strong current running. Either they missed the ford or were carried away by the current. Mohammed's horse floundered in the soft river-bed and threw his rider who was drowned.

The final blow to Christian resistance was dealt from an unexpected quarter. The last of the *Aventuros* had been overwhelmed so that there now remained only a handful of Germans and d'Aviero's small body of horse. Their continued survival was perhaps no more than a matter of minutes. This did not escape the notice of a mob of Arabs who had been lurking like cowardly jackals on the fringes of the battle, hoping to share richly in the plunder without risking their skins. Fearing that if they did not act quickly they might forego any share in the booty, they hurled themselves savagely on the exhausted Germans and the remnants of the Christian horse. They annihilated the former and broke up d'Aviero's squadrons. D'Aviero himself was killed and with him Aldana. Juan de Silva and other notables were taken prisoner.

On the Christian side there was no one left to resist. The battle of El-Ksar el-Kebir was over. In six hours the Moors had won a victory—they called it the battle of the Wad el-Mekhazen—which was to astound Europe and alter the course of history in two continents.

The heavy clouds of battle hung over a scene of indescribable horror and confusion of which the many thousands of distraught non-combatants were the centre. Twenty-one years before, at St Quentin, the French army, like the Portuguese at El-Ksar, had

been gravely hampered by a host of civilians—"as many servants as masters", according to Sir James Melville who was there. At St Quentin they had quickly bolted to the rear, thereby starting a panic which had spread through the whole French army. But on the field of El-Ksar there had been no escape nor rear to fly to. As the fighting men felt the battle had grown ever closer. "This army", an eye-witness wrote, "which did contain above three miles in compass, was in a moment consumed by the sword, and did so restrain itself through fear, that a small room might contain it."

The women, priests, servants and slaves, cowering among the transport and baggage, had had to endure many forms of anguish. From the commencement of the fighting they had shared their miserable shelter with an ever growing flood of terrified conscripts and those of the wounded who could limp or crawl thus far. But these were not all who had sought shelter. Others were faint-hearted fidalgos and nobles, some of whom skulked in their coaches and later pleaded the intolerable heat as an excuse for their cowardice. Before long there was such congestion in the small space into which all these people were compressed that distraught men and women were trampling each other to death in their terrified efforts to find a refuge from the consequences of defeat.

When, early in the battle, the Moors had got into the centre of the square they had wrought what havoc they could before being overcome or expelled. As the fighting grew closer the non-combatants came within range of the enemy's arquebusiers so that towards the end they were raked with shot from every side. Their terror reached its peak in the last stage of the battle when thousands of Moors fell upon them with flashing blades.

In the sixteenth century little mercy was shown to prisoners-of-war. At Haarlem, in 1574, Alva had put to death 2,300 prisoners in cold blood. The Turkish army, from whom the Moors had learnt the art of war, beheaded all prisoners. That, happily for the Christian survivors of El-Ksar, was one of the few Ottoman military customs not borrowed by the Moors. This was certainly not out of any feelings of compassion. It was because the holding

of Christians to ransom had been a lucrative source of revenue for generations past. The rulers of the whole Barbary coast had grown so dependent upon this traffic, in which the notorious corsairs had played the chief part, that it had become indispensable to their economy. The Christian Powers had had to acquiesce to the extent of posting official ransomers of captives at the principal African ports. To lay hands on a living Christian was the dream of the humblest of the population for it was the surest way to wealth.

When therefore the Moors fell upon the surviving Christians it was to secure prisoners rather than to complete the destruction of hated infidels. But the Christians, after witnessing so much slaughter, dared not hope that the Moors were sated with blood. They rushed madly about endeavouring in their frenzy to find somewhere to hide although knowing that concealment and escape were impossible. Some of the high-born, on the other hand, showed unseemly haste to surrender their weapons and cry for mercy, babbling promises of the rich ransoms they could offer. But it was not noble prisoners alone that the Moors desired. The women were among the first to be eagerly sought out of that struggling mass of terrified humanity. In their greed the pursuers sometimes turned their arms against each other, especially when competing for a particularly comely young woman or a noble whose rich apparel gave promise of a princely ransom.

To the shrieks of the women and the moans of the dying were added the cries of the wounded and of the panic-stricken animals—horses, mules and oxen—whose frantic efforts to escape added another terror to the scene. An especially horrible fate was reserved for some of the survivors. In the turmoil the baggage train caught fire and the powder kegs exploded, blowing to pieces both Christians and Moslems. The less fortunate were those who, unable to escape the rapidly spreading flames, were burnt to death. All who were left alive among the Christians and able to walk or ride were quickly carried away by their captors.

The field of battle was strewn with the corpses of men and animals. Over them swarmed a ghoulis mob of Moors and Arabs searching for the bodies of the rich, to strip them of their

finery, and carrying off the abundant booty with which the Portuguese had been so foolishly encumbered. Such was the final tragic scene, veiled in smoke and dust, on which the sinking sun threw its dull red glow that August evening.



*Philip I of Portugal*

THE MOORS SEARCHED anxiously among their prisoners for Don Sebastian and Mulai Mohammed. A captive Christian king would offer an unprecedented opportunity for political and financial advantage. The possibility of indulging their most brutal instincts by avenging themselves on the arch-betrayer of their country was also an agreeable prospect. But their two principal enemies were not among the prisoners and none, neither Moor nor Christian, knew what had befallen them.

Sebastian, like Mulai Mohammed, was among the dead. Towards the end of the battle his few surviving personal followers tried to persuade him to surrender, but he refused. One of them rode forward with a white handkerchief tied to the point of his sword. He was seized by the Moors who then hurled themselves upon the little band and, it was presumed, killed them all. No Christian who saw the King fall remained alive or, if he did, he kept silent rather than incur the odium of having witnessed an incident which it was a dishonour to survive. The Moors afterwards said that Sebastian had been killed unwittingly and unrecognised. This was probably true, for they would certainly have preferred him alive.

The Moors sent two of the Portuguese royal servants who were with the prisoners to search for the King among the dead, promising them their liberty if they found his body. Presently they found it, stripped of its armour and finery and covered in blood and wounds. They carried it, slung naked across a horse, into the camp where it was taken into the dead Shereef's tent. Some of the noble prisoners confirmed its identity but their offer of 10,000 ducats for its surrender was refused. Later the body was buried somewhere in El-Ksar el-Kebir.

Meanwhile Mulai Mohammed's corpse had been found on the river bank close to the ford in which he had been drowned. It was brought into the camp, but as we shall see, not for decent burial. From the circumstance that Sebastian, Abd el-Malek and Mohammed all fell in that six hours fight El-Ksar became widely known as the battle of the Three Kings.

The Moors had lost about three thousand killed. Estimates of the Christian dead varied considerably. If, exercising ordinary caution, we accept the lowest figure, the Christian dead did not exceed by much those of the Moslems, but this may leave out of account the casualties among the non-combatants. Although Moorish avarice favoured the survival of their foes, contemporary accounts of the battle and of the misery the disaster caused in Portugal leave little doubt that the losses in killed were very heavy. The Portuguese dead were mostly nobles and fidalgos who had been less willing to yield than the untrained conscripts who had readily thrown down their arms.

Notable among the dead were the Duke d'Aveiro, Christovão de Tavora, his brother Alvero Pires de Tavora, the Count of Vimioso and Alfonso de Norogna, as well as the eldest sons of many noble families. The Bishops of Oporto and Coimbra, the Papal Nuncio, Pedro de Mesquita and Sir Thomas Stukeley had also been killed, Stukeley fighting most gallantly till the last.<sup>1</sup> There was scarcely a noble house in Portugal which had not dead to mourn, and more than one great title was extinguished by the death in battle of its holder and all his heirs.<sup>2</sup> Portugal was like Scotland after Flodden Field which left scarcely a Scottish family of note unbereaved.

Among the thousands of prisoners were Juan de Silva, the Spanish ambassador, and the Duke of Barcellos whom the Moors mistook for the King and twice threw in the air for joy. Don Antonio, the Prior of Crato, was also a prisoner. Less fortunate was the wife of the captain of the papal troops, Hercule de Pisa, who later died a captive in Moorish hands. The uncertainty

<sup>1</sup> R. Hakluyt, *op. cit.* VI, p. 294.

<sup>2</sup> For a list of Portuguese casualties, dead and prisoners of war, see Barbosa Machado IV, pp. 422-424.

regarding the fate of the thousands of prisoners was to add greatly to the anguish which spread through Portugal directly the news became known.

During the battle many of the Christians had mounted loose horses and endeavoured to escape to Arzila. Of those who contrived to slip through the encircling cordon of Moorish horsemen very few ever reached the coast. Many of them were overtaken and slain or made prisoners. Most of the rest, ignorant of the country, had, like Mohammed, been drowned in the Mckhazen. The few who got safely across the river were captured by the local inhabitants. It was estimated that of the 26,000 who made up the Portuguese force less than a hundred reached the coast.

The Portuguese fleet was lying off Larache, hopefully awaiting the King's arrival, but its commander, Diego de Sofa, had been doubtful whether the Moors would allow him to reach the port. The continuous noise of battle, which, so surprisingly, was faintly discernible, seemed to confirm this fear. He thought first to bombard Larache in the hope both of encouraging the King by the sound of his guns and of discomfiting his enemies. He then considered returning to Arzila to which the King seemed likely to be forced to return. In the end he decided to abide by his orders and remain at anchor. Presently news of the King's death and the destruction of his army reached the admiral. This was followed by an order from Pedro de Mesquita, the governor of Arzila, to take the fleet there as the King intended re-embarking at that port. The admiral, suspecting that Mesquita knew as well as he did that the King was dead and that the reason for his wanting the fleet was only to effect his own escape, weighed anchor, sailed past Arzila and made straight for Tangier where he hoped to pick up survivors before returning to Lisbon.

The news of Sebastian's death and the destruction of his army did not reach Lisbon till 14 August, ten days after the battle. Profoundly anxious and apprehensive though the Council of State must have been ever since the expedition had sailed, they were aghast at the extent of the disaster which had befallen the country. With only a frail old man to succeed to the throne and no army to defend the realm, escape from what the whole country

most dreaded—the throne passing to the hated Philip and the country becoming a mere appanage of the Spanish crown—was no longer possible. There was no telling what would happen once the people heard of this bitter prospect. As the councillors, through supporting the King, had helped to bring ruin on the country they might well become the principal target for the rage and venom which the news from Africa would inevitably let loose. They therefore decided to suppress it until Cardinal Henry had been told what had happened. They sent secretly a Jesuit priest, Fray Jorge Serrano, to the great Cistercian monastery at Alcobaça, where the aged Cardinal was living in retirement, to announce his accession and beg his immediate return to Lisbon to take over the responsibilities of which they were now so impatient to be relieved.

In the meanwhile the people themselves began to grow suspicious. It was common knowledge that since the arrival of a courier from overseas the Council of State, contrary to their custom, had been meeting daily. There were rumours of messengers hurrying secretly to Alcobaça and into Spain, and whispers of traitorous communications with Philip. Over-anxious to prevent the truth reaching the people, the Council took steps which served only to aggravate the general apprehension and give wings to even wilder rumours. Letters coming into the kingdom from abroad were seized and all roads were closed to travellers. The inference drawn from such unusual precautions was that disaster had befallen the King and his army. "There was none in Lisbon", wrote a contemporary chronicler, "but had some interest in this war, whoso had not his son there, had his father; the one her husband, the other her brother; the traders and handicraftsmen, who had not their kinsmen there (and yet many of them had), did venture their wealth in it, some of them for the desire of gain, and others for that they could not call in that which they had lent to gentlemen and soldiers: by reason whereof all were in heaviness, everyone seemed to foretell the loss of such friends, and goods he had in Africk: and although they stood yet doubtful, yet might you understand their secret sighs."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Conestaggio *op. cit.* p. 55.

It was not possible to conceal the truth for long, and directly the Cardinal reached the capital it was released. On 22 August, eight days after the news had reached the Council of State, the Fugger agent in Lisbon was able to send a full and surprisingly accurate account of the battle to his principals in Augsburg. "When this sorry news came unto us", his letter concluded, "you can well imagine how great were the lamentations, the despair and the grief, not only in this city, but in all the land. The men went about as if dazed. The wailing of the women was so loud that it can be compared with that which arose at the taking of Antwerp. It is a woeful matter to lose in one day the King, their husbands, their sons, and all the goods and chattels they had with them. But what is even more terrible is that this kingdom now must fall under Spanish rule, which they can brook the least of all. May God Almighty therefore perform a miracle by our pious old Cardinal, who is a man of sixty-four, and grant him a male heir. It is also said that His Highness is willing to marry for the sake of this kingdom. Although there were others of the royal blood, such as the Infant Antonio, they have all fallen in this battle. Not one is left but our Cardinal, who made his way here at once on receiving the pitiful tidings."<sup>1</sup>

"I cannot well describe the general sorrow", wrote another, "how all things were filled with sighs, how every man was overladen with mourning: It was a pitiful thing to hear the women (whereof the most noble in their houses) from whence you might hear the noise, and the rest in the streets, pouring forth their cries and tears unto heaven, the which they redoubled so often, as the news was confirmed by any new advertisement: And as it often happens that minds suppressed do often times turn to superstition, so they and likewise many men did not believe what was said; but hoping beyond all hope, and trusting more than they should (although it was verified unto them that their husbands and kinsfolk were dead, yet would they have them still living) and deceived by sorcerers and witches, but most of all by their own desires, remained long without their widow's habit, expecting in vain news of him which was passed into another life. Many men

<sup>1</sup> *The Fugger News-Letters*, 1568-1605 (London, 1924), p. 26.

complained, and some cursed the King, and such as suffered him to go into Africk, one blames the King himself, another his favourites, some the Cardinal, and some the Chamber of Lisbon, who had not hindered so foolish a resolution; some did see that Portugal was near her last period, and with their own misery lamented their country's."<sup>1</sup>

The humiliation of so great a defeat at the hands of an enemy for whom hitherto they had had nothing but contempt, and the consequence of that defeat—the loss of the army and the impending loss of national liberty—filled the Portuguese with shame. The feeling of public disgrace drove the handful of survivors into concealment. Even a month after the battle Cristovão de Moura wrote from Lisbon to Philip II that no one yet knew what had really happened at El-Ksar.

The first prisoners to be released were naturally the nobles and fidalgos for many of whom the raising of ransoms from private sources had been possible. But the high-born were doubly dishonoured—by the defeat itself and by having survived their king. So they too hid themselves for shame. One of them, Nuno Mascarenhas, admitted having seen the King fall and explained that he himself had only survived because a renegade had come to his rescue and made him a prisoner.

There were bitter recriminations. The Germans had lost the day by deserting their comrades; the pikemen had failed to stand up to the enemy's 'shot'; the colonels who had recruited the army had enrolled only starving wretches who could not afford to bribe them; the courtiers should have restrained the King; the admiral, Diego de Sofa, had he wanted, could have helped the army and rescued more survivors, and so on. The magnificent deeds, such as those of the *Aventuros* and the Germans, were disregarded or forgotten and the man who received least blame was Sebastian, at whose charge their misfortunes should have been chiefly laid.

For many years no accounts of the battle were published in Portugal. This was due partly to a deliberate attempt to suppress the truth and partly to a general desire to forget the catastrophe

<sup>1</sup> Conestaggio *op. cit.* p. 56.

as quickly as possible. Men's minds were more occupied with the dismal consequences of the battle than with how they came about. There appears to have been a similar conspiracy of silence in Spain where, owing to the prospect of a union of the crowns of Castile and Portugal, the maintenance of Portuguese honour was of national concern. It is significant that the two earliest accounts of the battle, those of Joachim de Centellas and Fray Luis Nieto, both of which were published in 1579, appeared in French. The latter, although written in Portuguese, was not published in that language till three hundred years later. There was good reason for this. The author, a Preaching Friar and one of the many clergy who had taken part in the battle, recorded how the *fidalgos* had abandoned the King and sought to conceal themselves among the wagons of the baggage train. A disclosure of that nature, especially by a priest, was obviously intolerable. No eye-witness could write a truthful account of the battle which would bear the light of day in Portugal.

Few of Sebastian's favourites had survived. Those who had and who got back to Portugal were arrested, put on trial and sentenced, "it having been proved that the accused, being of the council of the late King Don Sebastian, and bound to advise him well and bring him out of all dangers, did the contrary, and advised him to go in person to Larache, a notoriously dangerous expedition, against my (Cardinal Henry's) opinion, and that of his grandmother and his uncle King Philip, and received from the king great honours and rewards, while those who dissuaded him were dismissed."<sup>1</sup> Pedro Carnicro, the dead King's Treasurer was expelled from the council and forbidden to come within 20 leagues of the court. Luiz da Silva was also disgraced.

Cardinal Henry was crowned in Lisbon on 27 August. His age was sixty-six but physically and mentally he was older than his years. Nevertheless, he took a sanguine view of his potency and, hoping yet to raise an heir, he applied to Rome for a release from his vow of celibacy in order to marry the thirteen-year-old daughter of the Duchess of Braganza. The Cardinal's optimism was not shared by his people who had little doubt that within a

<sup>1</sup> *Calendar of State Papers, Foreign* 1578-79, p. 528.

few months he would be in his grave. The succession to the throne was therefore a matter of deep and immediate concern to the whole country.

Philip II of Spain had a strong legal claim to the Portuguese throne, and several authorities maintained that none had a better. He was the grandson, through his mother, of Emmanuel the Fortunate, but another circumstance gave added strength to his title. Catherine, the queen of John III, had been pressed by Charles V formally to recognise Philip's son Don Carlos as heir presumptive to the Portuguese throne and had yielded secretly. Don Carlos was dead so Philip had a claim as father of the late heir presumptive. Philip had not only two separate claims but also the power to enforce them in the face of any opposition the Portuguese might offer.

There were a number of other claimants most of whom lacked the inclination or the power to assert their rights. Such were Emmanuel Philiber of Savoy, Alexander of Parma, Catherine de Médiçi and Catherine of Braganza, the mother of the Duke of Barcellos. One, Don Antonio, the Prior of Crato and son of the Cardinal's brother Luis, had a strong claim, made formidable by popular sentiment in Portugal, and had to be taken more seriously into account by Philip than the others.

The Cardinal-King, still hopeful of founding a dynasty, was opposed to both Philip's and Don Antonio's claims. The latter was out of harm's way in Morocco and being a poor man was likely to have difficulty in recovering his freedom. There was nothing very much to be done about Philip, but Henry took the precaution of seeing that prisoners in Africa who were known to be his supporters were not redeemed, anyway by the Portuguese.

The crown of Portugal meant far more to Philip than the mastery of the whole Peninsula. It would, he believed, end the financial embarrassments which had been the chief hindrance to his plans. The revenue of the great Portuguese empire—the East Indies with a great trade monopoly newly won from the Venetians, Brazil with its immense mineral wealth, possessions in West and East Africa yielding slaves and gold in abundance—would provide resources which would place him without a rival



in Europe. He would at last be able to crush religious dissension in his own dominions and then proceed with the conquest of the heretical English.

Catholic Europe had of course been quick to blame Elizabeth and her country for the disaster at El-Ksar. On the 26 August, immediately after the news had reached Madrid, the Papal Nuncio in Spain wrote to Rome declaring "there is no evil that is not devised by that woman, who, it is perfectly plain, succoured Mulocco (Abd el-Malek) with arms and especially with artillery".<sup>1</sup>

The battle naturally aroused much interest in England. The Queen and her ministers thought, like the French, that Philip would be forced to make peace in the Low Countries in order to settle with Portugal. But they were of course chiefly concerned with the possible implications for their own country. The Portuguese ambassador in London wasted no time in warning them of the probable consequences if Philip was allowed to succeed the Cardinal. Meanwhile exaggerated accounts of the magnitude of the Portuguese disaster had reached the English public among whom the battle was a popular topic. There were few who did not know the name of the notorious Thomas Stukeley whose death contributed very largely to the wide interest which El-Ksar awakened. Accounts of the battle were printed and widely distributed and it became, and long remained, a popular theme with contemporary writers of prose and verse.<sup>2</sup>

Philip of Spain, resolute for once in his life, wasted no time in making preparations to enforce his claim to the Portuguese throne. Henry might die at any moment. An envoy was sent over to Morocco to enquire whether Don Antonio was alive or dead.

<sup>1</sup> *Calendar of State Papers, Rome* 1572-78, p. 495.

<sup>2</sup> For example:

Menezes, *A dolorous Discourse of a most bloody Battle in Barbarie* 1578.

Ro C. *A True Discourse of Mulay Hamet's death* 1609.

Harrison, *The Tragical Death of Mulay Hamet*.

Ed. White, *A Brief Rehearsal of the Bloody Battle in Barbary* 1579.

George Peele, *The Battle of Alcazar* 1597.

*Mulay Molocco* 1580-1590.

*Life and Death of Thomas Stukeley* 1605.

A little fearful lest the Cardinal might not prove as senile as he appeared, the Most Catholic King took steps in Rome to ensure that he was not released from his vow of celibacy. As Elizabeth of England and Catherine de Médici would obviously spare no effort to thwart Philip, his ambassadors in London and Paris were warned to frustrate any attempts to prejudice his claim. Legists and theologians were sent to many parts of Europe to demonstrate the unassailability of his title.

Philip was especially active in Portugal itself where, with bribes and fair words, he endeavoured to win favour in high quarters. "I would you should understand", he wrote to the city council of Lisbon, "that there is no man living in the world, which hath received so great grief of the loss of the King's Highness my nephew, and of his soldiers as I, and the causes of my just grief are easily to be understood, because I lost a son, and a friend, whom I loved very tenderly; and in like manner I loved all those which were lost with him, because I do esteem all the subjects of the same realm as mine own." We unfortunately have no record of what interpretation the city fathers chose to put on those last words.

They were, however, infuriated by an admonition from Philip that they "have good regard to the performance of universal justice in their country, as though he took himself to be their king. ... It seems as if the Portuguese will all die before they subject themselves to the King of Spain."<sup>1</sup>

Philip was under no illusion about his unpopularity across the frontier and realised that mere blandishments were unlikely to secure the crown of Portugal. With foresight and energy he prepared to anticipate events by getting together an armed force with which to strike directly Henry died which, he thought, might happen at any moment. An expeditionary force of 36,000 men, some of whom were to come from Italy, was ordered to assemble, but it was thought 50,000 might be required. Some of the troops were to embark on a fleet of 59 galleys and 30 ships "with 9 or 10 more in case of accidents". These were to be sent round to the mouth of the Tagus to attack Lisbon from the seaward side. The rest of the force was to march on Lisbon, either from the north

<sup>1</sup> *Calendar of State Papers, Foreign* 1578-79, p. 449.

down the valley of the Tagus or from the east by way of Merida and Badajoz, and attack the capital simultaneously with the sea-borne invaders. This was in March 1579. But Henry had some months yet to live.

Don Antonio was not only alive but successfully raising money from the Moroccan Jews with which to pay his ransom. Before many months had passed he returned to Portugal and at once began to make ready to contest Philip's claim. The news that in his absence the Cardinal-King had excluded him from the succession by declaring him a bastard, which in fact he was, infuriated but did not discourage him. He collected a large number of adherents, who included "many worthless desperados of all nationalities", and was well supplied with funds by the Jews. As Philip had expected, Elizabeth and Catherine de Médici rallied to his support. In Rome he secured the annulment of Henry's decree of bastardy. These apparent successes probably exceeded his expectations but they did him more harm than good for they materially assisted Philip to win favour in Lisbon. That Don Antonio's chief supporters should be the two greatest enemies of Catholicism, Elizabeth and Catherine, antagonised the Portuguese court. Moreover the annulment of Henry's decree against Don Antonio forced the Cardinal-King to lend his own very powerful support to Philip's claim in which he was backed by both the nobility and the clergy. In January 1580 Henry publicly declared himself in favour of Philip. Before the end of the month he was dead.

Europe suddenly awoke to the gravity of the crisis. The prospect of all European possessions in America and Africa, the richest parts of Asia, the vast mineral wealth of the West, the equally important spice trade of the East and the great fleets of the two leading sea-faring nations of the world all passing under the control of the cold and cruel fanatic of the Escorial was viewed with profound and widespread concern. The spectre threw Elizabeth and Catherine de Médicis into a panic, for they were now powerless to prevent what they had most dreaded. France, the traditional enemy of Hapsburg power, was impotent through civil strife, and Elizabeth saw that England might have to face

alone the common peril, the colossus which threatened to impose its cruel tyranny on all western civilisation.

Don Antonio was the only hope. Elizabeth, determined to lend him all aid in her power and, anxious that no pains should be spared to make his case as strong as possible, "ordered certain lawyers of her's to look into the pedigree of the Portuguese throne."<sup>1</sup> Sir Amyas Paulet, the English ambassador in Paris, reported that "the Portuguese will die to the last man before they will admit the Spaniards". But the Queen wanted more reliable information and therefore sent a special envoy to Lisbon to report on the prospects of the various claimants. This man was Edward Wotton, described by Mendoza as "a young man of great learning and knowledge of languages, who has been in Italy and is a creature of Walsingham's. I cannot", concluded the ambassador, "discover what are his religious views."<sup>2</sup>

Wotton's report, which he forwarded to Walsingham on 18 August 1579, provides an interesting summary of the prospects of the claimants. "Concerning the succession in Portugal", he wrote, "I know not what to say; so much may be said both in favour and in disfavour of every one of the pretendants, by which I mean the King of Spain, the Duke of Braganza, and Don Antonio, for as for the Duke of Savoy and Prince of Parma, their parts are least in the pudding. Nevertheless I will as well as I can set down such reasons as may make both for and against every one of them, leaving the judgment to your wisdom."

"The things which are to hinder Don Antonio are the following. The King favours him not because of his dissolute life. He has many bastards by base women, most of them by 'new Christians'. It is feared therefore by the nobility that if he should come to be King, being unable by ordinary means to make them all great he will seek to advance them by extraordinary means, and perhaps take dignities and '*incommiendas*' from the rest of the nobility to give them. He is very poor, and therefore not able to win such of the nobility as are to be won by money; nor if it should come to force, would he be able to maintain a power in the field.

<sup>1</sup> *Calendar of State Papers, Spanish* 1568-79, p. 629.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 672.

“Things which may further him are, that he is generally beloved of the people, gracious in his behaviour, and liberal in spending.”

Wotton had not much opinion of the Duke of Braganza's chances. Although he was believed to have the support of the Cardinal-King, the nobility and the Jesuits and had the advantage of great wealth, he was not liked by the common people. He was also at a disadvantage through his son, the Duke of Barcellos, being a prisoner in Moorish hands, for “if the Duke be chosen King”, wrote Wotton, “the Moors will ask as his son's ransom the restitution of the forts held by the Portuguese in Africa, a thing very prejudicial to Portugal. He has not the gifts of nature to allure men that Don Antonio has.”

The report continues: “Things which may hinder the King of Spain: the great and deep-rooted hatred which is and ever has been between the Portuguese and the Castilians, which is like to cause the people to try all extremities rather than become subjects to them, whom they never thought worthy to be their equals. The great inconvenience which is like to grow to other princes and potentates, as the Queen of England, the King of France, most of the princes of Italy, by the over greatness of the Spaniard, if the country of Portugal should be annexed to the Crown of Spain; and consequently the great care these are like, or ought, to have to defend the Portuguese against the Spaniard. The great fear which the ‘new Christians’, who in Portugal are no small party, have of being subject to the cruelty of the Spanish Inquisition, which is much more severe than that in Portugal. The great desire of the Portuguese to be governed by a king of their own nation. The great charges the King of Spain is at by reason of the war in Flanders, besides the danger he is in of losing that country.

“Things which may help the King of Spain: the great forces he can make both by sea and land. The means he has of maintaining an army long time in the field, by means of the credit his power gives him with the merchants; together with the countenance the Pope and the Emperor are like to give him. The facility with which he may, and has already, as it is thought, corrupted (*sic*) many of the chief nobility of Portugal, who hunger and thirst

after gold. The general weakness of the Portuguese nation, as being altogether unacquainted with matters of war, men out of order and untrained, whose chief soldiers and captains were either slain in Africa, or are now prisoners there. The particular weakness of the nation, being divided in itself by reason of the two factions of Don Antonio and the Duke of Braganza; the weaker of which King Philip is likely in time to win to himself, and so strengthen his party. The King of Spain has truce with the Turk it is thought, and the Turk is encumbered by the Persian. If the King of Spain withhold the victuals, especially the corn, which goes out of Andalusia and Castile into Portugal, the Portuguese are in great danger of being famished in a short time; especially if with his *Armada* he keeps the sea or gets any of the forts at the mouth of the river which goes up to Lisbon, a thing not impossible for him to do.

"I will not take upon me to give sentence which of these three pretendants is likely to carry it away, but leave it, as I have said, to your consideration. Nevertheless ... I should pronounce the likelihood of succession to the King of Spain."<sup>1</sup>

Although Philip had secured the support of the Portuguese nobility and clergy, the age-long detestation of Spain remained alive, especially among the middle and lower classes. As soon as the succession to the throne became an immediate issue the smouldering hatred burst into flame and men prepared to oppose Philip. But the Fugger agent in Lisbon wrote scornfully of their powers of resistance. "They have not a single soldier in Portugal who has even seen any fighting or would know how to lead properly. They have no arms for they lost them all in the African war. They have no money and there is fearful scarcity in the country. Moreover the plague is raging everywhere. Yet, with empty hands, they think themselves strong enough for the Spaniards."<sup>2</sup>

Philip, seeing that he would not secure the throne without resorting to armed force, began to assemble his troops. The Pope

<sup>1</sup> *Calendar of State Papers, Foreign 1579-1580*, pp. 45-47.

<sup>2</sup> *The Fugger News-Letters 1568-1605*, Second Series (Queen Elizabeth) London 1926, p. 36.

intervened to prevent war but was told by Philip to mind his own business. Don Antonio placed himself at the head of the resistance movement in Lisbon. Alva crossed the frontier at the head of his *tercios* and, at the cost of only a hundred Spanish dead, crushed all opposition. Don Antonio fled to France and thence to England, taking with him the Portuguese crown jewels and the funds publicly subscribed for the ransom of captives still in Moorish hands. On 16 April Philip assumed the crown of Portugal in the presence of the Cortes, the nobles and the prelates.

The accession of Philip to the throne of Portugal carries us back into the main stream of European history. There is no need to pursue through such well charted waters the story of Portugal's "Sixty Years' Captivity" in Spanish fetters, of Elizabeth's championing of French interests in the Netherlands, or of the later adventures of Don Antonio who, fawned upon alternately by Elizabeth and Catherine, finally faded into oblivion.

But no account of the battle of El-Ksar would be complete without some reference to the Sebastianists, the strange sect whose origin derived from the disaster in Africa and whose adherence to their odd creed excited for more than three centuries first the pity and then the ridicule of Europe.

Sebastian's body had been recovered from the Moors. In December, 1578, it was handed over to the governor of Ceuta, where it remained until Henry's death. Philip had it brought to Portugal where it received its final burial in the church of Santa Maria at Belem where Sebastian had embarked for his ill-fated expedition. There were a number of people who refused to believe that the body which had been buried with so much pomp was really the King's. They included, no doubt, all those superstitious persons who, "deceived by sorcerers and witches", refused to believe that their kinsfolk had died at El-Ksar and would never return. The belief that Sebastian still lived received encouragement from the story of a wounded noble arriving at Tangier soon after the battle and winning admittance to the fortress by declaring himself to be the King. Confirmation was provided by an account of the battle, published in France, declaring that the King had been taken prisoner and that the body which had been handed

over at Ceuta was not his. It was even rumoured that Sebastian had escaped secretly from the battle and sought refuge with the mythical priest-king Prester John; later he was reported in Persia, and then again living *incognito* somewhere in Europe. This is the last of the striking analogies to Flodden Field whence King James was said to have escaped secretly and gone on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

More than one imposter tried to turn these rumours to account, only to be unmasked and executed. Don Antonio was implicated in one notable imposture of this kind. An Augustinian monk, Fray Miguel, who had been court preacher to Sebastian and afterwards confessor to Don Antonio, produced a man closely resembling Sebastian whom he declared was, in fact, the King. Fray Miguel had laid his plans carefully. He first persuaded the innocent Doña Ana of Austria, a natural daughter of Don John and at this time a young nun in the convent, that the man was Don Sebastian. Having achieved this, the intention was to send him to France where his acceptance by Henry III would be assured. He would then be proclaimed King of Portugal and married to Doña Ana, the necessary dispensation having been obtained from Rome. The story of the royal romance would win over all Portugal and Philip would have to renounce the throne. The imposter would then be murdered and Don Antonio proclaimed in his place. But disaster quickly followed the initial success with the innocent Doña Ana. The man set out for France but got no further than Valladolid where he was caught and identified. Both he and Fray Miguel were executed.

This was not by any means the last of the pretenders. The frequency of their appearance and their inevitable apprehension and execution did nothing to discourage the belief that the King still lived, although there was an understandable tendency for the imposters to choose some country other than Portugal for their *début*.

Pretenders did not cease to appear till the time came when Sebastian, if he were mortal, must have been dead. But the belief in the *Rei Encuberto* or Hidden King survived and became a religious cult, the devotees of which were known as Sebastianists.



They were to be found in every large Portuguese community and were scattered throughout the world.<sup>1</sup> The persistence of the cult, which survived till the end of the nineteenth century and may not yet be dead, once provoked a peer to remark in the House of Lords: "What can one possibly do with a nation, one half of which expects the Messiah, and the other half their king, Don Sebastian, who has been dead two hundred years."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Miguel Martins d'Antas, *Les Faux Don Sébastians*, Paris 1866.

<sup>2</sup> This remark has been attributed to Lord Tyrawley an Irish peer who cannot have sat in the English House of Lords, nor is there any record of his having sat in the Irish House of Lords during 1763, the year to which the remark is attributed, C. Clay, *Librarian to the House of Lords*, in a letter to the author.

*Mulai Ahmed el-Mansur*

**A**BD EL-MALEK had nominated as his successor his younger brother, Mulai Ahmed, who was aged twenty-nine at the time of the battle. This accorded with the Saadian law of succession which excluded from the throne the Shereef's three-year-old son who had been with his mother in Algiers at the time of his father's death. Once the battle was won the viziers lost no time in despatching messengers to all parts of the kingdom to cry the new Shereef's name to which was now added the surname El-Mansur, the Victorious, by which he became commonly known.

In other circumstances the many thousands of Moors gathered on the battlefield would have shown considerable interest in the succession, for on it depended the outcome of the many conflicting desires which divided the country. Instead, every man was wholly absorbed in securing for himself the greatest share in the spoils of war which, owing to the thousands of prisoners and to the extravagant Portuguese manner of campaigning, were now available on an unprecedented scale. Not only were there prisoners in abundance but they were the sort the Moors most coveted. In the long history of the corsair raids no prisoners had been more welcome than the Portuguese for they were less able to endure captivity than other Christians and had therefore always been the readiest to redeem themselves. The booty which lay strewn around the wrecked wagons and coaches, the gold and silver plate (including the sacred vessels of the King and the Duke of Barcellos) the sumptuous apparel, the luxurious bedding and the gay pavilions, were all of inestimable value in the eyes of the victors. Parties of Moors, each with their quota of dejected Christians and laden with as much booty as they, their prisoners and their beasts could carry, were making their way homewards to their towns and villages.

El-Mansur also took the road. Having re-assembled the regular troops, most of the irregulars having disappeared with their booty, and gathered in his share of the prisoners, he set out for Fez. His entry into the ancient capital of the kingdom resembled a Roman triumph as he and the thousands of prisoners and the tattered Christian banners passed below the tombs of the Merinids and through the Bab Guissa, the city's northern gate. Carried in the procession was a queer and gruesome object on which the many thousands who thronged the city walls and the rocky heights above feasted their curious eyes. This was the straw-stuffed skin of Mulai Mohammed which that day was commencing a tour of the principal cities and towns of the kingdom. It was an indignity especially reserved for the bodies of traitors throughout the Near and Middle East and recalled how the Persians had long preserved in their chief temple the stuffed skin of Valerian.<sup>1</sup>

The Jewish doctor described Fez after the battle. "As for the captives", he wrote, "I can give no judgment, because every 'Wildmore' or Alarve (Arab) has a Christian to his page, every caliver-man has pages going after him. The labouring Moors can get no money, because old Fez is so full of them (captives) that every handicraftsman has two or three Christian captives, and the citizens also for their gardens. The value of them was from 30 to 100 or 150 ounces and some of ransom 300, 400 and 500 ounces. ... This country remains so rich in gold, silver, harness of all sorts, mules, horses and oxen, that there is not a caliver-man that will serve a Moor, nor black Moor that was not lest richer than his (*sic*). I cannot express how much it is, and they who have not seen it will not believe it."<sup>2</sup>

Although Fez had favoured Mulai Mohammed, the pride and enthusiasm which so great a victory had aroused should have gone

<sup>1</sup> Leo Africanus in describing the customs of Cairo wrote: "But rebels or seditious persons they flay alive, stuffing their skins with bran till they resemble man's shape, which being done, they carry the said stuffed skins upon camels' backs through every street of the city, and there publish the crime of the party executed." *The History and Description of Africa*, III, p. 887.

<sup>2</sup> *Calendar of State Papers, Foreign* 1578-79, p. 168.

far towards reconciling the citizens to the new Shereef. Their traditional dislike of the Saadians was, however, re-awakened by a particularly ill-timed display of avarice by El-Mansur. He had all the prisoners of noble and gentle birth sought out for appropriation by himself in order that he might enjoy the rich ransoms which they would command. Some of them were still in the hands of their captors, others had already been sold to Jewish speculators who looked for a handsome profit on their bargains. No matter who their owners were, the high-born prisoners were all seized and handed over to the Shereef. Thus at the outset of his reign he acquired a reputation for greed which attached to his name for the rest of his life.

The resentment El-Mansur's avarice aroused quickly made him a target for general criticism. He was particularly reproached with failing to follow up his victory by completely ridding the country of the Portuguese for good and all. A more resolute leader, men declared, would at once have marched on Mazagan, Arzila, Tangier and Ceuta and quickly reduced their weak and ill-provisioned garrisons.

But El-Mansur was not a fool. Credit for the great victory which had placed him on the throne went to his dead brother. The new Shereef therefore was not a popular hero and he knew that he would probably have to defend his throne against sundry pretenders and their aspiring supporters. His nephew, En-Naser, who had deserted to the Portuguese camp on the eve of the battle, had escaped and might succeed in rallying Mulai Mohammed's followers to support any claim he might choose to put forward. Mulai Mohammed's son, Ech-Cheikh, was unaccounted for. Another nephew, Daud, was also a potential pretender, and, like En-Naser, he was destined to take up arms against his uncle. There were doubtless others who would be ready to champion Abd el-Malek's infant son, Ismail, who was in Turkish hands at Algiers. El-Mansur's immediate need was to secure his own position which could best be achieved while he had his victorious army still about him ready to crush opposition and overawe the unruly Fezzis.

How great was the need to establish control over Fez had been

clearly demonstrated on the day of the battle. Early in the fight a band of Arabs, taking advantage of the confusion caused by the temporary success of the squadrons led by d'Aviero and Meneses, had plundered the Moorish baggage train. The baggage guards, who were Fezzis, had fled in panic to their native city where they had announced that the battle was lost and the army in flight. Whereupon the townspeople had given full vent to their pent-up feelings of hatred for the ruling house. This disloyal outburst had shown El-Mansur where his greatest danger lay. But the likelihood of revolts in favour of one or more pretenders was not confined to Fez. El-Mansur knew he must prepare for trouble in any one of several centres of unrest.

The Shereef had also other perils to consider. He could not believe that Christian Europe would not attempt to avenge so great a defeat. Philip was known to have been anxiously watching the fortunes of the Portuguese army and to have prepared a fleet of galleys against the possibility of a disaster such as had occurred. At any moment, therefore, there might be a second and far more dangerous invasion to repel. But Spain was not the only Christian power that needed watching. Two years previously there had been talk of a French plot to seize Larache.

Nearer at hand were the Turks who had long been casting covetous eyes on the kingdom of Fez and who were still thought to be anxious to establish themselves on the Atlantic coast. They had been antagonised, as we have seen, by Mulai Abd el-Malck, and his triumph over the Christians might well decide them to attack his successor before he was properly in the saddle and able to turn the victory to account. Already there were rumours of an Ottoman plot. The Andalusians were suspected of being in league with the Turks to assassinate the Shereef who therefore took the precaution of beheading Daoli and others of their leaders.

In all these circumstances El-Mansur had been well advised to proceed straight from the field of battle to Fez. The sooner he could secure his own position the sooner would he be able to defend his country against the perils which were threatening from beyond its frontiers.

A reign inaugurated by so glorious a victory could not be wholly clouded by political cares. El-Mansur had only a little while to wait for gratifying proof of the stir which the triumph of Moorish arms had made in the world. He had wasted no time in announcing to the Turks and other Moslem Powers the destruction of the infidel host. While his envoys were carrying the glad news into the Moslem East the foreign political agents in Morocco, Spain and Portugal were spreading it no less quickly, but less gladly, through western Europe. The news was not well received anywhere. The Turks, more concerned with the advancement of their own interests than the ruin of the enemies of their religion and, exhausted by their profitless Persian campaign, were naturally jealous that it should have fallen to so petty a kingdom, and one which had so stubbornly refused to submit to the Ottoman yoke, to avenge their own crushing defeat at Lepanto.

In western Europe fear of the traditional Moslem peril to Christendom was once more awakened in an acute form. The possibility of an aggressive alliance between Turk and Moor had to be faced. To the enemies of Catholicism—England, France and the Netherlands—the more immediate peril was, of course, the implications of a union of the crowns of Spain and Portugal.

Although there was none to rejoice with the Moors all the Powers now desired their good graces. The old hope of the Turks that Christian aggression might one day force the Moors to accept Ottoman suzerainty found fresh encouragement in the likelihood of the full weight of Spanish arms being used to avenge El-Ksar. Philip, for his part, was deeply anxious to avoid forcing a Moslem alliance. The chief concern of a shattered Portugal was to secure the return of the thousands of her countrymen who were in Moorish hands. England, France and the Netherlands saw in the kingdom of Fez a potential ally against the growing power of Philip. No one of these states wished to appear backward in offering the traditional courtesies. Ceremony and punctilio must be strictly observed. It was not therefore long before a procession of obsequious ambassadors, both Christian and Moslem, began to arrive in Morocco bearing costly presents and the felicitations of their royal masters.

The first of the distinguished visitors was an envoy from the Pasha of Algiers. He was followed by Francisco da Costa, the ambassador of the Cardinal-King, whose business was to secure the freedom of Portuguese captives. He was the bearer of a present of impressive dimensions which, being composed largely of Chinese works of art, represented what at that time was most valued and admired in Portugal. It included a bed-of-state of cloth-of-gold silk rugs, chests and coffers of mother-of-pearl, a curiously wrought writing desk with forty-five drawers, two chess boards—one of mother-of-pearl and gold and the other of silver and crystal—with chessmen of gold and silver and of ebony and crystal, and many other examples of fine workmanship. It included also a very considerable amount of cash for the ransom of captives.

A contemporary document gives a list of some other presents without stating from whom they came. They included four "large and fair Flanders mares" and were a present to the Sherceef "for redemption of captives", so there can be little doubt that they had been sent by William of Orange to secure the release of some of the Walloons.

Elizabeth's ambassador arrived in May or June. Either he brought no presents or they were of insufficient consequence to be recorded. The Queen well knew that the Sherceef's dependence on England for munitions and on her connivance at the illicit traffic would ensure El-Mansur's goodwill. Another important visitor was the French ambassador bearing a magnificent present. What it was we do not know, but it failed to secure the alliance which Henry, ever anxious to ally himself with the enemies of Christian Europe, now sought with El-Mansur.

In the Sherceef's eyes the most important of these ambassadors was naturally the Spaniard, Pedro Venegas de Cordoba. Having once been governor of Melilla, Venegas had considerable experience of Moorish ways. He was accompanied by an *entourage* of forty which included Fray Diego Marin, the Spanish priest to whom Abd el-Malek had entrusted special missions to Philip's court. The ambassador's arrival at Safi, almost exactly a year after El-Ksar, was an occasion of great jubilation. He was met

by "the second master of the King's horses with twelve spare horses, their furniture being worth by estimation 1,000 marks each horse."<sup>1</sup> Salutes were fired and at the head of the guard of honour was the commander of the Moorish garrison who was an Englishman. Every mark of honour and consideration which the courteous Moors could devise was pressed upon the guest during both his brief stay in Safi and his progress to the court at Marrakech. Fusilades, drums and trumpets everywhere heralded his approach. His escort was two hundred mounted arquebusiers especially sent out from Marrakech under a kaid of the royal household. A magnificent pavilion, still unused since its presentation by John III of Portugal to Mulai Abdallah el-Ghalib forty years before, accommodated him at night until, to the consternation and chagrin of the Moors, its bearers went astray on one stage of the march. A cause of greater discomfort to Venegas, and an unpleasant reminder of what the steel-clad knights must have suffered at El-Ksar, was his inability to use his stirrup-irons on account of their intense heat.

Waiting for him and his *entourage* outside the capital were fresh horses, even more magnificently caparisoned than those provided at Safi. He was met by the foreign merchants—half of them Spanish—who joined in the procession behind the escort. Awaiting him inside the city were the two hundred royal halberdiers and a smaller number of *peiks* and *solaks*, all in their outlandish liveries. The twenty principal kaid of the kingdom in brilliant Turkish robes rode forward to greet him. He was then approached by the magnificent figure of the great Kaid Radouan, the Viceroy, the Portuguese renegade who had become the Shereef's constant companion and the most influential man in the kingdom. On the day of his audience with the Shereef the ambassador conducted himself with a humility which was only less gratifying to the proud potentate than the magnificent present of jewels of which he was the bearer. According to contemporary inventories there was a ruby the size of a man's palm, an emerald as big as an apple and of such brilliance that it blinded the beholder, and a casket containing 120 ounces of pearls the smallest of

<sup>1</sup> *Calendar of State Papers, Foreign* 1579-80, p. 121.



which was the size of a nut. A present of such dazzling splendour from so great a monarch as His Most Catholic Majesty astounded even the Shereef who spent the rest of the day displaying the jewels to his kaid. The descriptions of the present lost nothing in the telling and El-Ufrani, the distinguished chronicler of the reign, shared the current belief that Philip had prised some of the gems off the crown of his fathers in order adequately to honour the Shereef. Before withdrawing, Don Pedro thanked El-Mansur for so graciously surrendering Sebastian's body to Philip and for releasing his ambassador, Juan de Silva. He begged him to be kind to the young Duke of Barcellos who was then in Marrakech and whose release was one of the objects of the mission.

The least welcome of the ambassadors was the Turk. The relations between Stambul and the kingdom of Fez had remained strained ever since Abd el-Malek's display of gross ingratitude for the help the Turks had been to him in securing the throne. Murad III, little moved by the victory at El-Ksar, had given a cold reception to the Moorish envoy bearing the news of the battle. El-Mansur's alleged massacre of a body of pro-Turk Berber troops had further estranged the Sultan. El-Mansur, for his part, was resentful of Murad's granting asylum to his nephew Mulai Ismail, whom the Shereef regarded as a potentially dangerous pretender to the throne and of whom he would have gladly rid the world. When, therefore, the Turkish envoy arrived in Marrakech, bearing gifts which fell far short of what most Christian monarchs had sent<sup>1</sup> he was kept waiting for an audience long enough for there to be no doubt that a deliberate discourtesy to the Sultan was intended. It was an affront which Murad did not forget.

The Turkish envoy returned to Stambul at about the time of the assassination of Mohammed Sokolli, the famous Grand Vizier who for many years had successfully directed the administration of the Ottoman empire and controlled the policy of the

<sup>1</sup> These were a sword, a pair of balances, the picture of a man in gold, four Turkey robes, a banner with the Grand Turk's ensign. An English agent in Morocco reported to Burghley that "in all the presents ... is said to be contained a mystery". *Ibid.*

drunken Selim and of his successor, the scarcely less despicable Murad III. With Sokolli gone, the high admiral, Aluch Ali, had little difficulty in persuading the Sultan, who had become the tool of his viziers and favourites, to order the fleet to prepare for an attack on Morocco. One of the objects of the expedition would be to rid El-Mansur of his pro-Spanish counsellors. The preparations attracted notice and long before the fleet could sail El-Mansur got wind of what was afoot. He immediately ordered his fortresses to be manned and his harbours to be put into a state of defence. He was, however, far from confident of his ability to withstand an assault by the Turks for they had a formidable fleet and at Algiers a considerable army which had long menaced his country. He therefore hastily despatched a sumptuous present to Stambul the two bearers of which were skilled negotiators on whose diplomatic skill he counted to placate the injured Ottomans.

In the meanwhile the bitterness of anti-Moorish feeling in Stambul had been aggravated by Henry III of France. Ever anxious to please the Turks and to make trouble between them and Catholic Europe, he had spread a rumour through his ambassador in Stambul that El-Mansur and Philip were together plotting an attack on Algiers. Murad not only ignored the warning but, to the disgust of the French, proceeded to negotiate a three years' truce with Philip. Henry, still bent on trouble and suspecting that the Turks meant sooner or later to extend their dominion to the Atlantic, warned Murad that Philip intended to take advantage of the truce by occupying Morocco and thus forestalling him. Meanwhile the Ottoman fleet, with Aluch Ali in command, had already sailed. Influenced partly by the eloquence of El-Mansur's envoys, partly by a rumour that Aluch Ali was contemplating treachery, and partly by the unsatisfactory course of his Persian campaign, and in spite of Henry's warning about Philip's intentions, Murad suddenly changed his mind and recalled the fleet.

It was the middle of 1581 when El-Mansur's great fear of a Turkish attack was lifted from his shoulders and he became free to enjoy the fruits of the victory at El-Ksar. The vast quantities of

foreign gold which poured into Morocco for the ransom of the captured Christians were of course far more important to the shereefian treasury than the booty left on the battlefield and the costly presents so lavishly showered upon El-Mansur. We have no means of computing what the ransoms totalled, but we know that they continued for some years to be an important source of revenue. The Shereef entrusted the negotiating of the ransoms to his viceroy, Radouan. The price asked for the Duke of Barcellos was 400,000 écus but, as the result of Venegas's mission and the magnificent presents he brought with him, the young Duke was surrendered to Philip free of ransom after fifteen months captivity, and with him went eighty Portuguese gentlemen who were similarly liberated. Don Antonio should have commanded a princely ransom but he had managed to conceal his identity and was freed very cheaply and with much less delay than the Duke. No doubt most of the prisoners of noble and gentle birth found it comparatively easy to find their ransoms, for there would have been no point in fixing prices beyond their capacity to pay. Although the gentlemen were assessed at 5,000 cruzados a head the Shereef for a time refused to allow individual redemptions and fixed the collective ransom for eight hundred gentlemen at 400,000 cruzados. The lot of the common soldiers must have been exceedingly hard. Mostly the sons of poor parents, many had yet to wait years before recovering their freedom. For thousands of the poorest redemption was impossible. Most of those who had no hope of ever regaining their freedom or found their sufferings unendurable apostatised and entered the shereefian service in which there was no lack of Portuguese and other Christian renegades to keep them company.

Nevertheless, the ransoms totalled an immense sum of money and made the kingdom of Fez a very wealthy country. At Marrakech there was enormous expenditure on a vast palace called El-Bedi, the Wonderful, on which work commenced only five months after the battle it was built to commemorate. El-Mansur resolved that neither expense nor pains should be spared to make it the most splendid palace in the world. Thousands of Europeans, including Spanish architects and painters, were

employed on its construction. The most precious materials were sought for its decoration. The Shereef asked Philip to allow two Spaniards in his employ to make several voyages to India to select and bring home ship-loads of the rarest and most beautiful materials of the East. The marble of the thousands of columns of the palace was supplied from Italy and Ireland and paid for, it was said, with an equal weight of sugar. When the building was finished, six years after the battle, the halls decorated with mosaics, arabesques and encrustations of gold, the alabaster colonnades and balustrades, the marble courts with their sparkling fountains, and the gardens laid out with flower beds and fruit trees, combined to present a picture of unrivalled opulence and splendour.<sup>1</sup>

It was small wonder that financially embarrassed Christian princes soon began negotiating loans with the African Croesus. The King of France asked for 150,000 écus. At Elizabeth's instigation the Shereef agreed to finance Don Antonio up to £400,000, such an immense sum for those days that it seems highly improbable that the pretender received more than a small part, though he sent his son, Don Christopher, to Morocco as a pledge for the security of the loan.

For a period the Moors, or at least their Shereef and his favourites, enjoyed a degree of prosperity which they had never conceived possible. But luxurious living was not enough to satisfy the ambitions of El-Mansur.

<sup>1</sup> For detailed descriptions of El-Bedi see de Castries *op. cit. Pays Bas*, IV, pp. 570-583 and El-Ufrani, *Nozhet Elhadi*, pp. 179-181.

## *The Moors Re-arm*

IT WAS EVIDENT that the proud position which Morocco now occupied in the world could only be preserved at the point of the sword with which the kingdom's new consequence had been won. For all their blandishments, the Powers were not to be trusted. The Turks were bitterly jealous of Moorish prestige and Murad was still smarting from the Shereef's insolent treatment of his envoy. The Christian states were at heart implacable enemies of Islam and any one of them might suddenly turn against the Moors on whose territory they were casting covetous eyes. Philip was still pressing for the cession of Larache to which the whole world seemed to attach an importance out of all proportion to its merits as a port. It was the ultimate objective of the Turks, and France and the Netherlands had shown an impertinent interest in its disposal.

Even Elizabeth was not to be trusted. There had been loose talk at the English court of a proposal to seize another Moorish port, Mogador. With this port in English hands "the Spanish forces abroad must be drawn into Spain to defend their own", wrote Roger Bodenham late in 1579. "Spain and Portugal (if they join in one) shall enjoy no peace nor town in Barbary longer than we will ... it (the capture of Mogador) shall choke all Spanish traffic through the Straits. ... It shall shut up the mouth of St Lucar with the bay of Cadiz, and be able to defeat his (Philip's) navy of the Indies ... overthrow ... all the bankers and counters who be the only nourishers of wars in our time ... It will procure hereupon the revolt of the Indies" and so on.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Public Record Office, *State Papers, Domestic, Elizabeth*, Vol. CXXXII, No. 17 *apud* de Castries (*Angleterre* I, p. 365).

The maintenance of his armed forces became therefore one of El-Mansur's chief cares. Like his brother before him, he was dependent for his munitions on England which was still the only country prepared to defy the papal ban on the arms traffic. The period was one of great commercial activity between England and Morocco which culminated in 1585 in the formation of the Barbary Company, sponsored by the great Earls of Warwick and Leicester. That munitions were still an important part of this trade is shown by the few glimpses which have been preserved for us in contemporary state documents.

El-Mansur had not long been on his throne before Elizabeth sought the renewal of the agreement she had had with Abd el-Malek. The reason was her continued difficulty in obtaining saltpetre. According to Christopher de Hoddesdon, the Hamburg agent of the Muscovy Company, competitive buying on the Continent by various English merchants was making it increasingly difficult to get as much gunpowder as the Queen required. Writing to Burghley from Emden in March 1580, he reported: "Very good powder is also made here; and I was in good hope to have drawn the trade in it chiefly to this town, if other men's disorder had not hindered my endeavours. Since my coming I dealt with one of Brunswick for the value of £2,000 in saltpetre to be delivered here; but before I could go through with the matter, there was such buying up of powder in Hamburg by some of our company, and the price thereupon so increased, that most part of the saltpetre which should have been brought hither was forestalled by those of Hamburg to 'feed the humours' of our merchants there; who within one month have done more hurt in that respect than those who made provision for the Low Countries did in all last year. So although there shall be no unwillingness in me to perform this service, for the accomplishment of which I have my money in readiness at Hamburg, yet I assure you the price of powder is of late so enhanced that I am likely to be a great loser on what I must provide hereafter, and yet shall hardly get it so well made as what I have delivered already. This sudden alteration proceeds from no other cause than the greediness of our own merchants, as the thing itself will more effectually declare, if this

disordered running to Hamburg do not either stay itself, or be shortly stayed by your means."<sup>1</sup>

Under pressure from Philip, El-Mansur refused to renew the agreement with Elizabeth. But as time passed and his need for military stores became more pressing, he relented and Elizabeth's anxiety for her supplies of saltpetre was relieved. In 1581 the Queen granted a licence for 600 tons of timber to be cut in "our counties of Sussex and Southampton" for shipment to Morocco against payment of its total value in saltpetre, "considering how necessary a thing it is", runs the licence, "to have store of salt-petre for the increase and maintenance of our munition."<sup>2</sup> The timber was too urgently needed by the Shereef for the building of galleys for him to worry about offending Philip by letting Elizabeth have her saltpetre. As time went on England's needs for her own timber began to conflict with those of the Shereef who had to turn to Holland to supplement what little Elizabeth could let him have. Either because Elizabeth's needs in saltpetre were satisfied or because El-Mansur was obdurate, gradually sugar, always the biggest Moroccan export to England, came to be accepted in payment for munitions. Elizabeth still endeavoured to keep this munition business as quiet as possible and consequently only privileged merchants were allowed to take part in it. As the powerful Leicester was associated with them their position was well secured.

It was not long before Spain and other Catholic countries heard of the resumption of the traffic with the result that their nationals began to make things difficult for English merchants trading with Spain and Morocco. The victims were not so much the privileged few but the respectable traders who had no interest in the illicit traffic. The latter petitioned the Privy Council to put a stop to the "indirect and hard dealing of such as hath charged forbidden commodities ... into the heathen country of Barbary (which) hath not only caused great clamours to spread in other countries, that out of England there should be suffered to go

<sup>1</sup> *Calendar of State Papers, Foreign* 1579-80, p. 189.

<sup>2</sup> *Hatfield House, Cecil MSS.*, Vol. XI, f. 95 *apud* de Castries (*Angleterre* I p. 391).

munition, and other furniture, to the aid of infidels; which causeth our most true and pure religion to be brought in question ... for that, out of the land where it is professed, there is suffered to go galleys, framed timber and expert carpenters, with other provision to make galleys, as also shot, oars, and all other furniture for them."<sup>1</sup> This was the first we hear of the English building galleys for the Moors or of sending them shipwrights. The munitions trade had expanded and continued to do so.

In the middle of 1587 El-Mansur was demanding from England munitions on a scale which the Queen could not spare in the face of almost certain war with Spain. In the following year he suggested to Elizabeth that in order to advance her design to put Don Antonio on the Portuguese throne she should send him a hundred ships to transport across the Straits an expedition which he was prepared to send against Spain. It would, he believed, compel Philip to withdraw his troops from Portugal. On the arrival of the ships he would pay her 150,000 ducats. Later, the Shereef, much concerned about the weakness of his own fleet, instructed his ambassador in London to ask the Queen for an assurance that in the event of his finding himself at war with any of his neighbours he would be allowed to hire from England ships, mariners, carpenters and shipwrights and to buy oars and such other stores as he might require. By the end of the year the Shereef had forbidden the export of saltpetre, but he was still obtaining arms from England.

Such are the glimpses which British archives afford of the arms traffic during the eleven years following El-Ksar and of the extent of El-Mansur's reliance on English aid. There appears to have been a continuous and undiminishing flow of military stores from England into Morocco, the reasons for which are not immediately apparent. In the early years of El Mansur's reign there had been obvious need for a high degree of military preparedness, but the perils which had appeared so threatening had begun to recede. El-Mansur's more dangerous neighbours had become too deeply occupied with wars of their own to trouble

<sup>1</sup> Public Record Office, *State Papers, Foreign, Barbary States*, Vol. XII *apud* de Castries (*Angleterre* 1, p. 418).



about Morocco. A decadent sultan, corrupt viziers, mutinous janissaries and the interminable Persian campaign had so demoralised the Ottomans that it was impossible for Murad to embark upon any new military adventure. The union of Spain and Portugal had not been followed by the disastrous consequences their neighbours had expected; the revolt of the Netherlands was still sapping Philip's strength, and relations between him and Elizabeth had reached a pitch which appeared to make open war inevitable. Although Philip continued to press for the cession of Larache, El-Mansur knew there was little risk of his attempting to seize it. France was torn by civil strife and Elizabeth was fully occupied guarding England against threatened Spanish aggression.

Although all immediate danger of an invasion of Morocco had been removed, arms had continued to pour into the country and the accumulation of munitions of all kinds had become considerable. El-Mansur had already begun to plan the spectacular military enterprise which occupied the later years of his life.

He was still young and ambitious. He could place a big army in the field and he had an abundance of military stores. In the circumstances it would have been unnatural to remain content with the laurels won at El-Ksar. With all serious threats to his kingdom and his person removed, he looked about him for fresh fields to conquer. His people still wanted him to reduce the Portuguese and Spanish fortresses on the Moorish coasts, but this might have resulted in a disastrous war. Philip might cut his losses in the Low Countries, postpone the invasion of England, and turn all his forces upon the enemy at his gates. El-Mansur would have liked to rid his kingdom of the Ottoman menace by driving the Turks out of Algiers and back into Tunis, or possibly even into Egypt. But a trial of strength with the Turks might be as calamitous as one with Spain. They might abandon their profitless Persian campaign in order to crush the Moors and realise their old ambition of extending their frontiers to the Atlantic. Hemmed in on the north and east by these formidable neighbours and on the west by the Atlantic, the Shereef was forced to contemplate the forbidding wastes of the Sahara as the only direction in which imperial expansion was possible.

Far away on the south, beyond the desert, lay the rich negro countries of the Western Sudan the wealth of which was known to every merchant in the Maghreb. The ancient caravan traffic in gold and slaves, ivory and ostrich feathers, which the Moors bartered for the salt of Taghaza, had for centuries been the life-blood of the Barbary coast. All down the centuries a score or more of ports on that rugged shore had been crowded with Christian shipping lading precious cargoes from the heart of Africa.

In El-Mansur's time the rise of the powerful negro state of Songhai with its twin capitals, Gao and Timbuktu, both on the Niger, had given to the Western Sudan a strong central government and with it unwonted tranquillity. This had attracted to these remote countries large numbers of merchants from North Africa whose activities had greatly stimulated the caravan traffic of the Sahara. Of this trade the most important element was gold, but what none of the foreign merchants could discover was the mysterious country of Wangara where the negroes were believed to get their gold.

In the previous century this ancient trade had inspired Prince Henry the Navigator to explore the coast of Guinea in search of the unknown source. El-Mansur resolved to achieve by land what Prince Henry had failed to do by sea. He would seek out the hidden wealth of the negroes. But Songhai had first to be reckoned with. The need would therefore be, not for an exploring expedition, but a military force strong enough to crush the powerful negro state and yet capable of crossing the forbidding and almost limitless wastes which separated the kingdom of Morocco from the Sudan.

## *El-Mansur and Elizabeth*

THE STORY of the invasion of the Sudan by an army which, led by the Portuguese eunuch Judar Pasha, marched across the Sahara, and brought destruction to Songhai and untold misery to the negroes of the Sudan has been told elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> We are concerned here only with its consequences to Morocco.

El-Mansur's conquest of Songhai had been costly to Morocco as well as to the Sudan. It was said to have absorbed 23,000 troops, few of whom returned to their country and those who did soon died of the diseases they had contracted in the tropics. It had also sapped much of the country's military strength, in material as well as men. Although the mysterious Wangara had not been found the enterprise had filled El-Mansur's treasury to overflowing, so he was probably well satisfied with the result.

In later years his son and successor, Mulai Zidan, disappointed with what he found in his father's coffers, complained of the drain the campaign had been on the country. On the other hand El-Ufrani, the contemporary Moorish historian, tells us that as the result of the conquest of Songhai the Shereef obtained gold in quantities which stupefied the world. They called him El-Dzehebi, the Golden.

The testimony of the English merchants trading in Morocco accords with El-Ufrani's estimate. Among them was Lawrence Madoc who had been instructed by his London principal, Anthony Dassel, a member of the Barbary Company, "to discover ... the estate and quality of the countries of Timbuktu and Gao". In his first report, dated August 1594, he related how he had seen arrive in Marrakech thirty mules laden with gold. The weight of this treasure was probably not less than 70,000 ounces of

<sup>1</sup> E. W. Bovill, *Caravans of the Old Sahara*, Oxford 1933.

pure gold, then worth in English currency about 50s. an ounce, making a total value of £175,000, an immense sum for those days though perhaps comparatively modest by El-Mansur's standards. In a second letter Madoc promised to report later what the annual tribute of Gao was to be. That of Timbuktu, amounting to sixty quintals of gold, and valued by him at £240,000, had already arrived in Marrakech. "It doth appear", he wrote, "that they have more gold than any other part of the world beside. ... This King of Morocco is like to be the greatest prince in the world for money, if he keep this country."<sup>1</sup> Five years later Jasper Tomson, a member of an influential English commercial house and a witness of Judar Pasha's return to Marrakech from the Sudan, reported that the magnificent present which the Pasha brought for the Shereef included thirty camel-loads of *tiber*, as they called unrefined gold, which he valued at £604,800. Even as late as 1607, when the anarchy in Morocco and the Sudan which had followed El-Mansur's death must have adversely affected the amount of treasure flowing northwards across the desert, a Frenchman reported from Marrakech the expected arrival of 4,600,000 *livres* of gold from Gao and Timbuktu.<sup>2</sup>

The ransoms of captives taken at El-Ksar had enabled El-Mansur to begin his reign with a well-filled treasury from which he spent very freely. In his last years gold from the Sudan gave still greater opportunities for extravagance, but much of his new wealth was well spent on works of a military nature. At Fez he built two forts, known as El-Besatin or the Bastions, the name given them by the European slaves and renegades who worked upon them. There was also considerable expenditure on fortifications, notably at the much coveted Larache. Money was also wisely spent on developing and re-equipping the valuable sugar industry of Sus.

Heavy expenditure was lavished on the mosques, *medersas* and royal palaces for which foreign craftsmen were still imported.

<sup>1</sup> Richard Hakluyt, *op. cit.* VII, pp. 99-101; see also Samuel Purchas, *Purchas His Pilgrimes*, Glasgow 1905-7, VI, p. 60.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Masson, *Historie des Établissements et du Commerce Français dans L'Afrique Barbaresque*, Paris 1903, p. 92.

Captain John Smith of Virginia, who was in Morocco a few months after El-Mansur's death, tells us that "in all his kingdom were so few good artificers, that he (the Shereef) entertained from England, goldsmiths, plumbers, carvers and polishers of stone, and watchmakers, so much he delighted in the reformation of workmanship, he allowed each of them ten shillings a day standing fee, linen, woollen, silks, and what they would for diet and apparel, and custom-free to transport, or import what they would."<sup>1</sup>

El-Mansur was naturally indulging in heavy personal extravagance, such as large purchases of jewellery and other luxuries. In a different category, and arising out of his interest in astronomy and astrology, were his purchases of all kinds of astronomical and nautical instruments. In the year 1600 Edward Wright, an eminent English mathematician and hydrographer, heard from a correspondent in Marrakech that the approaching visit to London of a Moorish ambassador would provide an opportunity for profitable sales of the instruments in which he dealt. "Wherefore", wrote his friend, "your sphere, your watch, your mundane dial, and your sextants, your new magnetic instrument for declination, or any astrolabe that hath somewhat extraordinary in it will be accepted: and you might sell the same at good prices. ... You may cause to be framed some instruments in brass or silver, leaving the spaces for Arabic words and figures, yet drawing the pictures of them in paper exactly, and setting down the Latin figures and the words in Latin, or Spanish, which is far better: there will be found here that can grave the same in Arabic upon the instruments having some direction from you about the matter. ...

"Your magnetical instrument of declination would be commodious for a yearly voyage, which some make for the King over a sandy sea (wherein they must use needle and compass) to Gago [Gao]. If you question about the matter, and show them some instrument serving for this purpose, it will give great

<sup>1</sup> *The Travels of Captaine John Smith*, Glasgow 1907, II, p. 163. According to El-Ufrani the Irish were bartering marble in Morocco against an equal weight of sugar.

content. Other directions I might add unto you; but from the parties above named you may receive the same fully."<sup>1</sup> The presence of a French seaman with one of the military caravans suggests that in the desert the Moors had come to attach considerable value to nautical experience as well as to the use of the compass.

But gold was only part of the wealth El-Mansur was obtaining from the Sudan. When Mahmud Pasha, another of his generals, returned he brought the Shereef 1,200 slaves, civet and civet cats and many loads of ebony, in addition to quantities of gold.<sup>2</sup> Besides his thirty camel loads of gold, Judar brought "great store of pepper, unicorn's horns, a certain kind of wood for dyers to some 120 camel loads ... 50 horses, and a great quantity of eunuchs, dwarfs, and women and men slaves, besides 15 virgins, the king's daughters of Gao, which he sendeth to be the King's concubines."<sup>3</sup>

The common people benefited little from their country's new-found wealth which was of course largely concentrated in the hands of the Shereef and his favourites. Although the degrading poverty of the masses went unrelieved, the merchants reaped large profits in satisfying the needs of the court. The unprecedented demand for European goods brought prosperity to the foreign merchants and to none more than the English. Philip's coveting of Larache and the defeat of his Armada had so excited the Shereef's hatred and contempt that the Spanish merchants had lost all their old advantage. Their English rivals, on the other hand, had never enjoyed so much favour, even when the relations between Abd el-Malek and Elizabeth had been at their

<sup>1</sup> Samuel Purchas, *op. cit.* VI, pp. 57-59.

<sup>2</sup> El-Ufrani, *op. cit.* p. 169.

<sup>3</sup> The pepper was Malaguetta pepper or chillies, often called grains of Paradise, whence the Grain Coast of Guinea got its name. The unicorn's horns were probably rhinoceros horns; the alternative suggestion of oryx horns is unacceptable for the oryx was, and still is, found in the Sahara and must therefore have been well known in Morocco and its horns not accounted of particular value. Negro eunuchs were regularly exported from the Western Sudan, especially to Turkey.

friendliest. The Shereef, too, employed English craftsmen instead of Spanish. He sent to London for his jewels besides his astronomical instruments. He was still a big buyer of English munitions.<sup>1</sup>

Free trade was permitted in linens, broadcloths and woollens for which there was a big demand and which came chiefly from England. The advantage to the Barbary merchants of London and their agents in Marrakech was very great, especially as there was no lack of valuable produce with which to freight their ships for the homeward voyage. The principal cargoes loaded in Morocco by English ships were still sugar and saltpetre, in the preparation of both of which Englishmen were employed by El-Mansur. Other regular exports to England were gold, ostrich feathers, indigo, beeswax, hides, almonds, dates, horses and hawks, chiefly falcons and tiercels.

English interest in the wealth which Morocco was deriving from the Sudan was not limited to its direct benefit to their Barbary trade. It was awakening wider aspirations. The English would have been dull indeed had not the sight of these golden streams pouring into Morocco awakened in them the same desire to discover the hidden gold-fields of Wangara that had first inspired the great discoveries of Prince Henry. The trade of the English with the Guinea coast had been resumed and expanded, and the opportunities it offered for penetrating the interior suggested the possibility of diverting to the sea El-Mansur's gold at its source. What Hakluyt called "the searching and unsatisfied spirit of the English" might succeed where Prince Henry and El-Mansur had failed. The enterprise crystallised out in 1618 with the formation in London of the Company of Adventurers for the Countries of Guinney and Binney (Benin) for the Discovery of the Golden Trade of the Moors of Barbary.

<sup>1</sup> That Elizabeth was still anxious to conceal her country's interest in this trade is suggested by the secretiveness of Henry Roberts, her ambassador at El-Mansur's court from 1585 to 1589. "The particulars of my service", he wrote at the conclusion of his appointment, "for divers good and reasonable causes, I forbear to put down in writing." R. Hakluyt *op. cit.* VI, p. 427.

Meanwhile El-Mansur was contemplating an equally ambitious scheme for exploiting English friendship. Some time in July 1600, "a good ship of London called the *Eagle*" put into a Moroccan port where she embarked a high official of the shereefian court. He was accompanied by two local merchants, an interpreter and twelve retainers. Their destination was reported to be Aleppo where they intended to buy pearls. The *Eagle*, however, took a very different course from that expected, for early in August she anchored at Dover. This had been intended from the first. The attempt to conceal the destination of the Moors was probably due more to the very secret nature of their mission and to the fear that they might be intercepted at sea by the Spaniards, who had long been waylaying English ships in the Straits,<sup>1</sup> than to respect for the English Queen's well-known dislike of publicity in her relations with the Moors.

The secret, however, was not very well kept. Before the *Eagle* sailed George Tomson, an English merchant in Marrakech, and a relative of Jasper Tomson, sent to London an account of the Moorish party for the information of Sir Robert Cecil. The Secretary of State must have read it with some misgiving. The leader of the diplomatic mission, for such was its nature, was Sidi Abd el-Wahed. He was travelling as the ambassador of the Shereef from whom he carried a letter addressed to Elizabeth begging her to give very careful consideration to the important proposals which the bearer would lay before her and which were of too secret a nature to commit to writing. Tomson had a very low opinion of Abd el-Wahed whose "nature is to speak well of such as are most bountiful unto him, and to such he will show a merry countenance. What his behaviour may be there (London), I know not; but here no gentility appeareth in him." The second member of the mission was Sidi el-Hadj Messa, a merchant who had "great skill in all manner of pedreria, as in diamonds, rubies and such like." He might have been the leader had he not disgraced himself on a previous mission by failing to

<sup>1</sup> The *Eagle* had a narrow escape. Only three days after she sailed seven Spanish warships searched the Moroccan coast from Safi to Agadir for English shipping.



disclose to the Shereef his acquisition of two balas rubies valued at 30,000 ounces.<sup>1</sup> The third member was another merchant, El-Hadj Bahanet who, like El-Hadj Messa, was accompanying the ambassador on business. There was also the interpreter, Sidi Abdallah Dodar, an Andalusian who had at one time been a soldier in Italy, probably in the service of Philip; his mother tongue was Spanish but he intended using Italian in London. He was a personal friend of Tomson who said "he is of more sense than all the rest and a very honest man."<sup>2</sup>

Travelling with them was a party of Netherlanders. They had been captives of the Moors, probably taken at El-Ksar, and Elizabeth had long been pressing for their release. El-Mansur, realising that continued obduracy might prejudice the object of his mission and his acquiescence further it, had allowed them to sail with the ambassador.

When news of the arrival of the party reached London the Knight Marshal, Sir Thomas Gerard, accompanied by a number of gentlemen and the principal London merchants trading with Barbary, rode down to Dover to welcome the Moors and escort them to the capital. On their arrival in London the visitors were lodged and boarded at the Queen's expense in Alderman Ratcliffe's house near the Royal Exchange.

The court was at Nonsuch Palace whither the ambassador journeyed to present his letters. He was granted an audience at which he disclosed the mysterious object of his mission. This proved to be an astonishing proposal that the Queen should ally herself to El-Mansur with the object of a joint attack on Spain. The ambassador had much to say about the great military resources of his master, laying rather unconvincing emphasis on his ample supplies of war materials for which hitherto he had been so dependent on England. The ambassador was also full of promises of the aid which his master would afford the Queen in the proposed enterprise. He would provision all Spanish places near to Morocco which the English might capture. He would meet all

<sup>1</sup> A marginal note in the original reads "2600 £ str."

<sup>2</sup> Public Record Office—*State Papers, Foreign, Barbary States*, vol. XIII *apud* de Castries, (*Angleterre* II, p. 165).

the needs of the Queen's fleet in grain and munitions and he would even man her ships for her. Lest she might underrate the importance of the shereefian army, the ambassador reminded her that it had lately conquered an important kingdom in Guinea of no less than 86,000 cities. The ambassador, who appeared to think that there was no limit to the Queen's gullibility, wound up with the rather startling assurance that England and Morocco united would be able to deprive Philip of all his possessions in both the Old and the New Worlds. The extent of El-Mansur's arrogance was probably not as surprising to his contemporaries as we might suppose for they had done much to encourage it. In 1579 Ralph Lane had proposed to Burghley an alliance with El-Mansur, and a little later a similar proposal had been made by Roger Bodenhams. In 1596 the States-General had asked El-Mansur to join an alliance between the Netherlands and England whose combined fleets were, they declared, about to seize Cadiz. Much had been said and done to flatter El-Mansur and encourage his arrogance.

We unfortunately have no record of contemporary comment on El-Mansur's proposal. We may be sure that the Queen was unwilling to place any faith in the Shereef's promises. His failure to give the help he had promised to Drake during his attack on Lisbon in the interests of Don Antonio was certainly fresh in her memory, and none knew better than her that the Shereef was not well supplied with military stores. It was transparently obvious that all El-Mansur intended was to induce the Queen to attack Philip in order to relieve Morocco of the Spanish menace at no cost to himself. That Elizabeth's friendship should have led the Shereef into presenting to her so absurd a proposal showed the conceit of the Moorish mind and its profound ignorance of the western world.

Nonetheless, Elizabeth had no wish to affront the head of a state, however simple and barbarous, on whom she still depended for saltpetre<sup>1</sup> and other valuable merchandise and who held many

<sup>1</sup> England's supply of gunpowder seems to have been precarious up to the second half of the seventeenth century. On the 12 Feb. 1667/68 the Admiralty issued the following: "Order to resume the practice of saluting foreign princes; To the Lieutenants: Dover Castle and all the

of her subjects at his dubious mercy. After allowing three weeks to elapse, as if giving careful and prolonged thought to the proposal, she sent the ambassador a diplomatic answer which led him to hope that after further negotiations, to be conducted in Marrakech, a way might be found of carrying out the Shercef's project. Meanwhile she continued to treat Abd el-Wahed as an honoured guest. On her birthday he and his companions were provided with a special stand from which to watch the celebrations.

The City merchants had by now had time in which to form their own estimate of the visitors. They had little doubt that the mission were nothing but a cloak for commercial espionage. An official minute suggests that the Privy Council held the same view. "He of Barbary", it read, "used great words of offer in general of any assistance to the Queen; he brought her also certain captives of Holland and Zeeland; but his drift was, under cover of their formal voyage, to learn here how merchandise went, and what gain we made of their sugars, that he might raise the prices accordingly."<sup>1</sup>

This suspicion was confirmed by subsequent experience of these unwelcome guests. "Notwithstanding all which kindness showed them", read the official record of their visit, "together with their diet, and all other provision for six months space wholly at the Queen's charges: yet such was their inveterate hate unto our Christian religion and estate, as they could not endure to give any manner of alms, charity, or relief, either in money or broken meat, unto any English poor, but reserved their fragments, and sold same unto such poor as would give most for them. They killed all their own meat within their house, as sheep, lambs, poultry, and such like, and they turn their faces eastward when they kill anything: they use beads, and pray to saints.

Governors of forts and castles within the Cinque ports, and to the Lieut.-Governor of Portsmouth; that they do with Decency and Prudence re-assume the Liberty heretofore practiced." *The Mariner's Mirror*, Vol. 36 (1950), p. 40.

<sup>1</sup> Public Record Office—*State Papers, Foreign, Spain*. VII *apud* de Castries (*Angleterre* II, p. 200).

“And whereas the chief pretence of their Embassy was to require continuance of her Majesty’s favour towards their king, with like entreaty of her naval aid, for sundry especial uses, chiefly to secure his treasure from the parts of Guinea, etc., yet the English merchants held it otherwise, by reason that during their half year’s abode in London, they used all subtlety and diligence to know the prices, weights, measures, and all kinds of differences of such commodities, as either their country sent hither, or England transported thither: they carried with them all sorts of English weights, measures, and samples of commodities.

“And being returned, it was supposed they poisoned their interpreter, being born in Granada, because he commended the estate and bounty of England: the like violence was thought to be done unto their reverend aged pilgrim, lest he also should manifest England’s honour to their disgracc.<sup>1</sup> It was generally judged by their demeanours, that they were rather espials than honourable ambassadors; for they omitted nothing that might damnify the English merchants.”<sup>2</sup>

The Privy Council did their best to rid themselves of Abd el-Wahed and his companions immediately after the delivery of the Queen’s reply. It was made difficult by El-Mansur’s insistence that, in order to preserve secrecy, their homeward journey should be made by way of Aleppo. The Levant Company was instructed to provide the necessary passages, but the owners of the *Eagle* were determined not to repeat the experience they had already had of carrying the Moorish party in one of their ships. It was then decided to send the Moors to Aleppo in a warship, but after considerable expense had been incurred in getting the vessel ready for sea Abd el-Wahed took fright and refused to sail except in a merchantman. But neither merchants nor mariners would carry them, pleading that it was “odious and scandalous to the world to be too friendly or familiar with infidels.” The longer the Moors stayed the more they antagonised the citizens of London and the

<sup>1</sup> The man they were suspected of murdering was not the interpreter but Sidi el-Hadj Messa.

<sup>2</sup> John Nichols, *The Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth*. London 1823, III, p. 516.

greater became the danger of the outraged populace, who were notoriously intolerant of foreigners even of their own colour, creed and culture, undoing such good as the Queen's forbearance had achieved.

Eventually the Privy Council's patience became exhausted. Feeling that El-Mansur was taking himself and his absurd proposal for a joint attack on Spain rather too seriously, they told Abd el-Wahed that in spite of the Shereef's wishes he must return direct to Morocco. Even so it took more weeks to provide the necessary passages. When at last the tiresome guests had gone, taking with them a letter from Elizabeth to the Shereef apologising for her inability to meet his wishes regarding the homeward route of his envoys, the trouble they had caused was not quite over. The Privy Council had to meet various claims for services rendered, not the least of which was for the damage done by the "Barbarians" to the house of Alderman Ratcliffe in whose interests the Lord Mayor had intervened.

El-Mansur died of plague in August 1603. "Towards his subjects", wrote an anonymous Englishman with a good knowledge of Morocco, "he was not too tyrannical, but sweetened his absolute power and will with much clemency. By diverse ways he got excessive store of gold ... I omit his love he took in entertaining foreign artisans, the re-edifying of his house in Morruccos (Marrakech), getting Italian marbles, the richest that could be bought for money, and workmen hired from thence at great wages, his sumptuous provisions for his saraile (harem) and maintenance of his women, not so much delighting in the sin, as his predecessors had done before, as to show his glory, because the fashion of the country is such to show their riches and greatness upon that frail sex and their attendances. For his chief pleasures were to see the gallantry of his kingdom managing their good Barbarian steeds, and the falcons upon their wing making fair flights after the heron."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *A True Historicall Discourse*, London 1609 *apud* de Castries, (*Angleterre* II, p. 329).

El-Mansur had come to the throne at a moment when the kingdom of Fez occupied a place in world politics and a prestige in Christendom which it had never before enjoyed and to which it never again rose. That proud position was as much due to the folly of Sebastian of Portugal and his advisers as to the notable ability of Abd el-Malek. In its creation El-Mansur had played no part. But his success in maintaining it was considerable. Such a glorious victory as that won on the field of El-Ksar might have tempted a lesser man to try to drive the Spaniard from Moorish soil or even challenge the power of the Turk, either of which courses would certainly have led to ruin. It is easy to condemn El-Mansur's conquest of Songhai on the ground of its cost in human life, but at least it went far to achieve what its author intended and it contributed in no small measure to the maintenance of Moorish prestige in western Europe.

Looking back over the centuries we can clearly see how ill-deserved that prestige was, how flimsy was the structure of the Moorish state and meretricious the façade which it flaunted to the world. There had been little enough excuse for Philip's belief that his country was seriously threatened by the Moors, but it was not till El-Mansur's death and the resulting disruption of his kingdom that the spectre was laid and the old dread of the Moor was for ever lifted from the Peninsula.

## *Note on the Contemporary Accounts of the Battle of Alcazar*

OF THE VARIOUS ACCOUNTS of the battle of El-Ksar, the most important are those published over the names of Joachim de Centellas, Fray Luis Nieto, Franchi Conestaggio and Hieronymo de Mendoza. They were written in that order.

Centellas was a Portuguese and Nieto a Spaniard, but neither of their narratives was published in the language in which it was written. Centellas's appeared in French in the same year as the battle was fought. Nieto's was written the following year but was not published for more than three centuries, and then only in French.

Had a Portuguese dared at the time to publish in his own country a true account of what happened at El-Ksar he would, of course, have been tried and condemned for *lèse-patrie* and so would a Spaniard, anyway after the union of the crowns of Spain and Portugal. It would appear that the battle was too painful a memory for anyone in the Peninsula to wish to know the full truth. As late as 1643 a Portuguese historian's comment on the battle was that the Moors would have had to yield to Portuguese valour had not the Portuguese had first to yield to the numerical superiority of the Moors.

The narrative attributed to Centellas, but which may have been the work of another, has no special value. Its author, whoever he was, had not been present at the battle. Luis Nieto, on the other hand, had been one of the Preaching Friars who had accompanied Sebastian's expedition and is an important source of information.

The year 1586 saw the first appearance of Franchi Conestaggio's *The Historie of the Uniting of the Kingdom of Portugall to the Crowne of Castil* which contains the most important account of the battle.

Conestaggio was a Genoese in the Lisbon customs service. The book, which was dedicated to the Doge of Genoa, is bitterly critical of the Portuguese. It is evidently the work of one who kept a close but contemptuous watch on the preparations for the expedition and who also was present at the battle. It is generally believed that Conestaggio merely lent his name as a cloak for someone else and that the dedication was to add colour to the deception. Popular opinion and the commentators of succeeding generations concurred in attributing the authorship to Juan de Silva, the Spanish ambassador in Lisbon whose duty it was first to keep Philip fully informed about Sebastian's preparations and later to accompany the expedition to Africa. The book was widely read and was translated into Latin (1602), French (1596), English (1600), and Spanish (1610).

In 1607 Hieronymo de Mendoça published his *Jornada de Africa*. Its object was to discredit the Conestaggio narrative and to give an account of the battle more favourable to the Portuguese. Mendoça was himself present at the battle as a member of the corps of *Aventuros*.



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